“The Map is Not the Territory”:
A Spatial Reading of Pynchon’s California Trilogy

Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies

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Candidate: Ali Dehdarirad **Supervisor: Prof. Giorgio Mariani**

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Contents

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Abbreviations

Throughout this thesis, Thomas Pynchon's longer works are cited parenthetically in the text using the following abbreviations:

V	*V.* (1963)
CL	*The Crying of Lot 49* (1966)
GR	*Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)
SL	*Slow Learner* (1984)
VL	*Vineland* (1990)
MD	*Mason & Dixon* (1997)
AD	*Against the Day* (2006)
IV	*Inherent Vice* (2009)
BE	*Bleeding Edge* (2013)

Introduction

Thomas Pynchon's novels are undoubtedly among the highest achievements of American literature in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. Harold Bloom considered Pynchon among the "four living American novelists" who "deserve our praise." Although we know very little about his personal life, there is an enormous body of criticism on Pynchon's fiction and its importance for literary postmodernism. In 1976, Richard Poirier described Pynchon as "the epitome of an American writer out of the great classics of the nineteenth century – Hawthorne, Emerson, and Melville especially" (29). In his famous essay on postmodernism, in 1991, Fredric Jameson provided a shortlist of exemplary postmodernist writers which includes Pynchon together with some other iconic postmodern figures.[1] The inclusion of Pynchon on Jameson's shortlist is very telling insofar as he is one of the most influential theoreticians of postmodernism. In 2007, Rachel Adams observed that "Thomas Pynchon may be the most frequently cited author in the vast scholarship on literary postmodernism" (252). Similarly, in 2012, Brian McHale suggested that "the fiction of Thomas Pynchon appears to be universally regarded as central" (*Cambridge Companion* 97) to the canon of postmodernism. Indeed, in 2015, he went on to argue that:

> No literary career, perhaps no career of any kind, is more intimately involved with the trajectory of postmodernism, from beginning to end, and even beyond the end, than Thomas Pynchon's. Pynchon's novels bookend postmodernism and keep pace with all of its successively unfolding phases, from the onset (*The Crying of Lot 49*, 1966) through its rebranding and peak phase (*Gravity's Rainbow*, 1973), to the post-1989 interregnum (*Vineland*, 1990), all the way down to the new millennium and the emergence of postpostmodernism. (*Cambridge Introduction* 187–188)

Many books have analyzed Pynchon's novels from different points of view, focusing on a various range of themes. To mention but a few, in *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination*, Sascha Pöhlmann analyzes the postnational dimension of his work by defining and concentrating on the

[1] See bibliography, page 137.

concept of "nation-ness" (7). In *Thomas Pynchon and American Counterculture*, Joanna Freer provides a thorough analysis of the 1960s counterculture across Pynchon's work. Martin Paul Eve's *Pynchon and Philosophy* offers a detailed investigation of the ideas of Wittgenstein, Foucault, and Adorno with regard to Pynchon's texts. Nevertheless, despite the already existing material and the growing criticism on Pynchon's fiction, I believe, a specific analysis of his spatial imaginary in the so-called California trilogy is highly needed. In 2014, Scott McClintock and John Miller published *Pynchon's California* which offers critical analyses of the California space in different California novels. However, it is a collection of essays that has a different approach of dealing with that setting than what I aim to achieve in this thesis. For one thing, these single essays address exclusively certain themes and issues, such as family, resistance, postmodernism, and narrative, in relation to the space of California. For another, not always do they take into consideration and follow an investigation of these themes in all the three novels. Therefore, while *Pynchon's California* remains an insightful starting point for my analysis, my objectives in examining the California space, and my approach for that matter, are different. Indeed, in this thesis, I aim to concentrate on the theme of spatiality in order to examine the development of Pynchon's spatial imagination in the trilogy. By doing a geocritical analysis of the three California novels, I endeavor to show the change in his spatial vision from *The Crying of Lot 49* to *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*. This critical approach is part of a "spatial turn" with broader dimensions that has been important to literary criticism as well as philosophy and cultural studies in general. Therefore, before moving on to the novels, a number of important issues must be addressed.

Until WW II, the dominant discourse in critical theory was that of time and history. From that point onward, nevertheless, an interest in space started to germinate. Discussions of space, together with its related concepts such as cartography, spatiality, transgressivity, and so on, have increasingly become important for literary and cultural studies; so much so that the term "spatial turn" was invented. Promising intriguing interdisciplinary issues and areas of research, space in relation to postmodern theory has been foregrounded in critical thought insofar as many scholars and critics have been developing new models to interpret and understand the uprising issue of spatiality in relation to the postmodern condition. As Fredric Jameson's conceptualization of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles makes clear, there is "an alarming disjunction" (44) between body experience and the built environment which proposes to write a new "mapping" of the postmodern space. One critical approach of literary and cultural analysis, that has emerged out of

the focus on the issue of space, is geocriticism. A rather recent methodology, the term *geocriticism* was coined by Bertrand Westphal in 2008 in a book of that name and was later elaborated on in more detail by Robert Tally. Although Tally understands the concept of geocriticism in a more interdisciplinary and broad sense of the word, both scholars put space first. For Westphal geocriticism refers to a "geocentered" (112) approach to literature and cultural studies in which a certain place serves as the pivotal point for a host of critical practices. These different interpretations create a pluralistic image of that particular place in order to better understand it. "Drawing on interdisciplinary methods and a diverse range of sources, geocriticism" (X), in Tally's understanding, "attempts to understand the real and fictional spaces that we inhabit, cross through, imagine, survey, modify, celebrate, disparage, and on and on in an infinite variety." He believes that "geocriticism allows us to emphasize the ways that literature interacts with the world, but also to explore how all ways of dealing with the world are somewhat literary." In other words, for Tally, geocriticism allows to understand real places by studying their fictionality and at the same time understand fictional places by examining their levels of reality. One can think of precursors to this discourse. In 1991, in *Fragmented Urban Images: The American City in Modern Fiction from Stephen Crane to Thomas Pynchon*, Gerd Hurm was already talking about "this analogy between the actual and the fictional city … the critical analysis of literary city image" (105).

However, as far as Pynchon's fiction is concerned, there are many reasons why a geocritical analysis is compelling. Pynchon's novels deal with many real and imagined places and spaces. To mention only a few names from his first novel *V.*, the narrative engages in various places around the world such as New York, Paris, Florence, Malta, Cairo, Alexandria, Corfu, Rotterdam, Spain, Africa and the Middle East. In fact, on the back cover of the paperback edition of the novel, released by Penguin in 2007, the infinite list of the countries and cities is summed up by the phrase "constantly moving between locations across the globe." As Brian Jarvis has observed, there is "an acute geographical awareness in Pynchon's work from the outset" (53). But in Pynchon's fiction space is developed as a conscious, well-constructed proper theme that brings forth and interacts with many important issues. For instance, Nicholas Spencer has argued that Pynchon is "especially concerned with the imposition of spatial power through transformations of urban space" (139). Indeed, in a 1969 letter Pynchon himself wrote, "The physical shape of a city is an infallible due to where the people who built it are at. It has to do with our deepest responses to

change, death, being human" (qtd. in Seed 241). Regarding Pynchon's vision in terms of the literary representation of cityspace, Richard Lehan argued that Pynchon's fiction "helped create a postmodern discourse that determines how we conceptualize the literary city as imagined reality" (280). If his fiction is so concerned with the theme of space, a geocritical analysis of Pynchon's novels is essential. As David Harvey has famously mentioned, "Geography is too important to be left to geographers" (*Manifesto,* 7). More specifically, on the spatial turn, Edward Soja wrote that "Space was too important to be left only to the specialized spatial disciplines (Geography, Architecture, Urban Studies) … The spatiality of human life, like its historicality or sociality, infused every discipline and discourse" (*Thirdspace* 47). In this respect, as part of my argument, I will discuss how the application of a geocritical approach to Pynchon's novels opens up a new perspective to understand crucial aspects of his work that develop in the course of his career but remain constant all throughout.

It has been suggested that the title of Pynchon's debut novel *V.* shows the two different directions of his later novels.[2] On the one hand there are the big historical and global novels, *Gravity's Rainbow, Mason & Dixon,* and *Against the Day,* and on the other there are the smaller novels that have been grouped together as the California trilogy: *Lot 49* published in 1966, *Vineland* in 1990, and *Inherent Vice* in 2009. Thomas Schaub suggested that these three novels can be considered as a trilogy of California novels which "return again and again to the same place and time: more or less from 1964 to 1971" (30). In 2013, Pynchon's most recent novel to date *Bleeding Edge* came out, opening new ways of categorizing the novels. McClintock and Miller have suggested that "*Bleeding Edge* would qualify as the most typically 'Californian' of Pynchon's works to date, putting aside the fact that it is set almost entirely in New York City and its immediate environs" (14). However, apart from the fact that the setting is New York, Pynchon himself has labeled the novel as "a historical romance." With that in mind, it is useful to notice that the California novels share some distinguishing characteristics which make it compelling to group together and analyze them under one umbrella. As the name California trilogy suggests, the setting in these novels is California, and for the most part Southern California. They are further connected

[2] In the introduction to *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails,* Paolo Simonetti argues that "we might take the V of the title as hinting at the two divergent, but not too different directions of Pynchon's writing: the great, encyclopedic, proliferating exploration of a (more or less) remote past, and the more intimate memories, between fact and fiction, of a recent past—roughly 1958 to 2001 (the years of Pynchon's own adult life)" (6-7).

to each other by the decade, the 1960s, in which Pynchon himself lived in California. In this respect, California can be considered as a chronotope. Furthermore, in all the three novels there is a sort of more accessible plot which mostly rotates around one single protagonist who undertakes a rather linear quest, as opposed to the bigger novels where the reader comes across the interwoven web of multilayered plots. Therefore, they are shorter in length and, structurally, less complex compared with the bigger, encyclopedic works. The genre in these works is the detective story that is, par excellence, representative of Southern California. The novels deal with three different stages of Pynchon's life: *Lot 49* represents the early stage of his career, *Vineland* was published almost at the time of his marriage, and *Inherent Vice* belongs to the later phase of his life and career. Moreover, one can see that in relation to the longer historical novels, the California trilogy represents the local as opposed to the global. In other words, the California novels address many of the same issues and concerns that set in motion and shape the bigger texts.

The California coast is the literal and geographical end of the frontier and has always been important in the cultural imagination of the American nation. California is the end of the westward expansion of European civilization, the land of the Gold Rush and Hollywood that promises the mythical image of the American dream. It represents the sunny "promised land" of mild climate, beautiful natural landscapes, and an easy, alternative lifestyle at the farthest extreme of the Western civilization that have been commercially advertised by the images of the Malibu beaches and Disneyland. As Stephen Hock, among many others, has observed, "California can serve as a site where the original lost promise of America might be recaptured" (203). In fact, the myth of California is often associated with the notions of alternative possibilities, renewal, and better chances of life. For Pynchon, California holds a particular and peculiar place in his fiction where the fate of America and the hope for redemption are evoked. Regarding *Inherent Vice*, for example, Bill Millard has argued that the novel "is rich with particular spatial and cultural references" (68) which are "nothing new in Pynchon." However, what makes these local spatial and cultural references particularly interesting is "the concentration of them in a single region [California], instead of their distribution across the nation or the world" which "makes the book's rendering of Southern California exceptionally credible and nuanced." Although Pynchon addresses the California space in this trilogy, his fascination with California goes well beyond these three novels insofar as it has an important presence in the bigger global novels, as well. Like in *Vineland*, at the

end of *Against the Day* there is a series of family reunions in the California space set in the 1920s. In fact, the California chapters play a significant role in the novel. As John Miller has suggested, "in *Against the Day*, California, like the book itself, is a 'Counter- Earth' that serves to remind us that the familiar world of 'the day' can always be recreated and thus possibly redeemed, at least in fiction" (198). Elsewhere in *Gravity's Rainbow*, in the ending scene of the novel in the 1970s, Pynchon depicts a rocket positioned right above the fictive Orpheus movie theater in Los Angeles which threatens to take the world with it. Regarding *Mason & Dixon*, Hock has observed that although this work "is not one of Pynchon's California novels, the nominal connection that Pynchon draws between the Northmen's 11th- century Vineland and California's late 20th-century Vineland indicates how Pynchon's oeuvre, taken as a whole, positions California as the end result of the history of European settlement in the North American continent" (202). In fact, a more thorough study of the California space would take into consideration all of Pynchon's novels. However, it would require more time and a broader body of critical analysis which is beyond the purview of this study.

Pynchon's treatment of California is in some peculiar way unique, making it an intriguing case of spatial analysis that is absent from the works of other authors dealing with the same place. Setting these novels in California, and having spent a good part of his life and career in that place, Pynchon is somehow representative of the spirit of California. Nevertheless, neither Pynchon nor his work is exclusively or even strongly associated with California, like the works by other writers such as, for instance, Philip K. Dick or Raymond Chandler. In fact, another crucial perspective of his fiction is linked to the space of New York. Pynchon was born, lived, and currently lives in New York. His debut novel *V.*, in part, and his most recent novel *Bleeding Edge*, for the most part, are set in New York. This emphasizes the fact that Pynchon's life and career is rooted in California as well as New York, thus, in some way representing an image of America herself. With this understanding, I aim to analyze Pynchon's spatial imagination, particularly, in relation to the California space. It is also my hope to do such a spatial analysis regarding the New York space at some point in the future.

Drawing on the works of Bertrand Westphal and Robert Tally, in the first section of chapter one, I provide a theoretical definition of geocriticism as an analytical instrument/approach, and then go on to analyze the spatial aspect of Pynchon's fiction in his early life and career. Through

a geocritical comparison between the invented city of San Narciso in *Lot 49* and Orange County in California, I argue how the urban trend "postmetropolitan transition" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 140) can be deduced from the novel's spatial representation of cityspace. Analyzing the fictional and political spaces in Pynchon's first California novel, I elaborate on the implications of the San Narciso-Orange County analogy in terms of the narrative structure. In section two, I provide a definition of the concept of "Thirdspace" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 1) in relation to Pynchon's fiction, going on to explain the possibility of an alternative reality in *Lot 49* by reading imaginary San Narciso through the optic of Thirdspace. In this respect, the fictional underground communication system the Tristero plays an important role.

In section one of the second chapter, I briefly expound on the idea that Pynchon's work is suitable for a geocritical analysis. Moving from his early work toward *Vineland*, I describe the significance of the seventeen-year gap between the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* and his second California novel in terms of Pynchon's spatial imagination. Through an analysis of the urban form "postmetropolitan transition" in connection with the fictional town of Vineland in Humboldt County, California, I argue that Pynchon's spatial vision of city structure takes a different direction from *Lot 49* to *Vineland*. A geocritical comparison of the fictive College of the Surf and Trasero County in the novel with California's Orange and San Diego Counties sheds useful light on the historical and political dimensions of Pynchon's thought and its significance regarding the development of the narrative. More importantly, it helps understand how the depiction of the space of politics in Pynchon's fiction evolves in the span of about 24 years. Concentrating on the notion of Thirdspace, in the second section, I investigate whether the novel can offer an alternative reality. In doing so, I draw on the role of mythical spaces in the novel in order to demonstrate the change in Pynchon's imagination of mythological places at this stage of his career.

Having provided an introductory note on Pynchon's growing understanding and engagement with the issue of spatiality, in section one of chapter three I argue that *Inherent Vice* brings Pynchon's spatial awareness to a further stage where the beach, together with the Ocean, plays a fundamental role. Drawing on the analyses in the previous chapters, I show how Pynchon's spatial imagination from *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice* develops. Toward this end, I analyze space on four different levels. In "*Inherent Vice* and the 'postmetropolitan transition'," I discuss how an analysis of Soja's urban model "postmetropolitan transition" in the text shows the change in

Pynchon's understanding of city planning from his first to the third California novel. In "Political/Historical Space," I deal with the spaces of freedom and action against the dominant structure of power and control and how Pynchon's fiction represents such spaces over the course of time. In "Space on Fictional/Mythological Level," the role of mythical spaces in Pynchon's work becomes clear as we can notice the way in which his understanding and envisioning of supernatural places evolves. In "Space on a Theoretical level," in section two, I concentrate on Thirdspace in order to show how Pynchon's spatial thought moves in a different direction during the course of years. Furthermore, I tackle the issue of alternative realities and how the California landscape can provide a redemption in the novel. These four levels of spatial analysis demonstrate how Pynchon's spatial vision over the course of some 43 years changes. The importance of this spatial development is that by analyzing a more complete and broad series of novels, the California trilogy, we realize that Pynchon's spatial imagination evolves in a significant, but constant, manner.

If the theme of spatiality, and space in general, is so fundamental in the development of Pynchon's oeuvre, then a geocritical analysis of his fiction is necessary. Reading Pynchon's work through the lens of geocriticism can provide invaluable insights by allowing us to see his fiction in an original light insofar as it provides a novel understanding as to how and why Pynchon's depiction of various spaces, i.e. urban, mythological, political, and theoretical, from *Lot 49* to *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* differs. Allowing us to critically situate and better understand the significance of the spatial change in Pynchon's work, geocriticism significantly contributes to Pynchon Studies: it provides the possibility to observe through a novel perspective the change that takes place in the big picture of Pynchon's career in terms of the pre and post-*Vineland* novels and the much-debated idea that *Vineland* is a turning point in his fiction.

Chapter One

The Crying of Lot 49

1. Introduction

1.1. From the Fifties to the Sixties: A Critical Moment of Change

The so-called "Long Sixties" (Marwick 9) was one of the most significant decades of political and cultural change in America's history. Although it is impossible to delineate in a few pages the social and political changes in the historical panorama of the U.S. in the 1960s, my goal here is to emphasize the historical context of that decade as a moment of change. The passage from the conservative political and cultural atmosphere of the 1950s to the bright and vibrant possibilities opened up in the initial years of the Sixties was a promise to many young Americans who hoped to see a better America in the future. In this historical context, it becomes possible to think of Pynchon's novels as narratives that mirror some of those significant cultural and social events that changed the course of American society in later years.

Many of the important events of the 1960s were rooted in the social and political context of the "Tranquilized Fifties" (Lowell 187). In effect, from the 1950s to the 1960s there was a moment of transition in the historical and cultural panorama of American society. After WW II, in 1953, general Dwight D. Eisenhower became the 34th U.S. President and the first Republican to hold that position since Herbert Hoover in 1928. His presidency was punctuated by the continuation and further escalation of Cold War tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union at a time when America continued its policy of containment, already started under Harry Truman, to stop Soviet expansion in the world. Eisenhower's presidency marked the Fifties as conservative and suspicious years charged with the threat and fear of communist infiltration in America. In fact, what came to be known as McCarthyism later affected many writers, artists, teachers, civil right activists, and government employees who lost their jobs on charges of supporting communism. Therefore, with the fear of the spread of the communist ideology in the world, under Eisenhower's leadership and then U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' direction, CIA activities increased on the pretense of resisting the expansion of communism, especially, in third world countries.

While Eisenhower was so concentrated on foreign policy, the cultural and political atmosphere within the American society was very much stagnant and monotonous. Indeed, the 1950s were years of social conformity.

Referring to his short story "Entropy," Pynchon writes in the introduction to *Slow Learner*: "what strikes me nowadays about the story is not so much its thermodynamical gloom as the way it reflects how the '50's were for some folks" (14). He observes that as long as Eisenhower was in office "One year of those times was much like another." Pynchon wrote "Entropy" in 1958 or 1959 and it was arguably the most important of his short stories which attracted a lot of critical attention. In 1960 "Entropy" was selected for publication in the anthology *The best American short stories, 1961: and the Yearbook of the American short story*. Tony Tanner described it as Pynchon's "first important short story" (153). Later in 1984, Pynchon included it in *Slow Learner*, a collection of five early short stories originally published between 1959 and 1964. In "Entropy," Pynchon's "most successful" (Plater 138) story, he explains that "when I talk about '57 in the story as 'back then' I am being almost sarcastic" (*SL* 14). Describing such a short span of time, between 1957 and 1958-1959, as "back then," Pynchon's sarcasm refers to the general sensation of stagnation and conservatism under Eisenhower which was "something like Limbo" (60).

With John F. Kennedy in office, as the 35th U.S. President, the balanced equation of power between the CIA and the former President started to tremble. When Kennedy took office, the Eisenhower administration had already planned the Bay of Pigs invasion to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba. The newly elected President was left with a tough situation at the height of the Cold War and had almost no choice but to authorize the operation. In April 1961, the CIA was given a green light but the attempt to overthrow the Cuban government failed. Later in 1962, when Operation Northwoods was proposed, Kennedy rejected the plan. The operation called for the CIA to commit acts of terrorism against American civilians and military targets, blaming it on the Cuban government in order to use it a casus belli to justify a war against Fidel Castro. In *Vineland*, Pynchon makes a parody of such paranoid efforts and U.S. policies to overthrow governments that it deemed prone to communism. Regarding Cuba, we learn about an "American Martyr" (219), named Virgil ('Sparky') Ploce, who "was the first American of many who have attempted to clear from the face of our hemisphere that stubborn zit known as Fidel Castro." Ploce died in 1959 "in the Crusade Against Communism." Pretending to be "an ultrazealous Cuban Communist," he managed to win "the bearded dictator's" trust. His plan was "to have offered to Castro, and then lit

for him, a giant Cuban cigar that actually contained an ingenious bomb of 'Sparky's' own design." However, because "the head and the tuck of the cigar" were almost identical, security guards were alert to the danger that the "freedom-loving" American soldier was posing. "Overseers of a typical Red Slave State, they apprehended and executed Lt. Col. Ploce on the spot." This comedic scene seems to refer the presence of the American forces in Cuba, organized by the CIA, and the felonies they committed to justify the need for an invasion of Castro's country. Kennedy's relation with the CIA was different than that of Eisenhower's. After the Bay of Pigs invasion failure, Kennedy felt that he had been set up by that agency and reportedly said that he wanted to "splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it into the winds" (Marchetti 29). He made it known that he intended "to dismantle the CIA and assign its functions to the other intelligence units within the government" (Hollander 98).

The Fifties politics was that of conservatism in close connection with the CIA while the beginning of the Sixties manifested a new phase of American politics under Kennedy who supported the Civil Rights movement. These years promised new possibilities for Americans and more openness to repressed groups such as homosexual, racial, and poorer communities. Kennedy's New Frontier ambitiously promised federal funding for education, medical care for the elderly, economic aid to rural regions, and government intervention to halt the recession. In his acceptance speech in the 1960 United States presidential election to the Democratic National Convention, he used the term "New Frontier" as the Democratic slogan to inspire America to support him:

> We stand today on the edge of a New Frontier—the frontier of the 1960s, the frontier of unknown opportunities and perils, the frontier of unfilled hopes and unfilled threats. ... Beyond that frontier are uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered problems of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus.

The expansion of power to a new frontier, namely space, had already been heightened with the beginning of the Cold War. With rising fear that the Soviet Union would invade the U.S., Eisenhower was determined to create a satellite to surveil any Soviet threats or ballistic missiles. In 1957, when the U.S.S.R launched Sputnik, the first artificial Earth satellite, it gained enormous prestige around the world and triggered the Space Race. Until then Eisenhower was not particularly

keen on supporting the space programs. Nevertheless, this incident made him introduce a national campaign that aimed to ameliorate both space exploration and science and higher education in a competition with the communist rival. When Kennedy came to office, he was willing to get rid of the manned space program. However, the competition became more prominent when Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet astronaut, succeeded to fly in space for the first time. Fearful of falling behind the Soviet Union in the Space Race, Kennedy became interested in enhancing U.S. technology to fill the U.S. "missile gap" in the race. "No nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in this race for space," he declared in a speech at Rice University in Houston, Texas on September 12, 1962.

This struggle for power and control is in some peculiar way present in Pynchon's fiction. David Seed has argued that the Courier's Tragedy in *Lot 49* might be "an application of Norbert Wiener's comparison between the mania for information in the USA and USSR with Renaissance Venice as 'nothing but the old Italian cloak-and-dagger melodrama presented on a larger scale'" (121). He observes that "Jacobean melodrama supplies Pynchon with a means of dramatizing Cold War paranoia in offering him conspiratorial patterns to mimic."

Though Kennedy did not live long enough to see the realization of his ambition, on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first person in human history to walk on the Moon. Such huge achievements in science and technology took place in the Sixties at the culmination of the Cold War between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Neil Armstrong's landing on the moon was a show of American power in its imperialist efforts against the Soviet Union to colonize the new frontiers around the world. In *Against the Day*, through the character Lew Basnight, "The 'spotter' from White City Investigations" (41), Pynchon touches upon the issue of the frontier. Lew tells Professor Heino Vanderjuice how disconnected he feels the people down in Denver are as he is supposed to go there on a mission. The professor explains that as the frontier ends, disconnection beings. He observes that as longs as the frontier was there, you knew where "Denver and Cripple Creek and Colorado Springs" (58) were situated and where the divide between "natives and strangers or Anglos and Mexicans or cavalry and Indians" was. But as the natural frontier ends there is a disconnection. Published in 2006 with its narrative taking place between the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the time immediately following the First World War, *Against the Day* spans a different period of time than the 1960s. However, in hindsight, this could be a

reflection on the fact that America was reaching the end of its natural frontier and, thus, new frontiers of imperialism, and American Empire, were taking shape.

When Kennedy became President, there was the promise of a better society in the panorama of American politics and culture. These years were the beginning of an up-and-coming decade of hope and prosperity in living conditions of Americans. In the introduction to *Slow Learner*, Pynchon mentions that "One of the most pernicious effects of the '50's was to convince the people growing up during them that it would last forever" (14). He observes that "While Eisenhower was in, there seemed no reason why it should all not just go on as it was." Indeed, only with Kennedy in office did things begin to change for Pynchon because, up until then, under Eisenhower the general feel of the decade was static and conservative and "there was a lot of aimlessness going around." As Theodore Solotaroff wrote about the repressed behavior of the youth in the Fifties, "It was a time when the deferred gratifications of graduate school and the climb to tenure and the problems of premature adjustment seemed the warranty of 'seriousness' and 'responsibility'" (314). He went on to mention that in the 1950s, "In contrast to today [the 1960s], everyone tried to act as though he were thirty" (315).

Nevertheless, Kennedy's assassination made a big change in the American politics and society. After the Cuban failure, Kennedy made several senior CIA officers resign. However, the CIA was too powerful to be dissolved. Kennedy's assassination in many ways suggested the involvement of the Intelligence Agency. Many journalists, filmmakers, and critics were suspicious of the official report of the President's assassination by Lee Harvey Oswald. In a radio interview with the host David Mendelsohn, broadcast in 1988 by KPFA in Berkeley, California, James Garrison, District Attorney of Orleans Parish in the 1960s, concluded that the conspiracy to assassinate the President was programmed by the CIA itself who did not want the Cold War to end.

Such debates reinforced the idea that perhaps the Intelligence Agency was more powerful than the Presidency itself. This incident made the American nation face a moment of confusion insofar as the idea of an important single leader who guided the nation was shattered into pieces. The assassination made the American public grow more suspicious of their politicians. Americans were struck with the fear of possible menaces originating within the U.S. itself rather than those of the Cold War and communist countries. Such a mood can be observed also in Pynchon's fiction. A novel about World War II, *Gravity's Rainbow* was written during the Vietnam War which

reflects the Cold War time and America's policies. The novel even makes references to both Kennedy and Nixon who, as U.S. Presidents, had a difficult time dealing with the Cold War. Tyrone Slothrop, the protagonist of *Gravity's Rainbow*'s, comes to realize what many young American soldiers discovered by the end of the Sixties. As Andrew Gordon wrote, Americans found out that "Our Magical Mystery Tour in the Zone of Vietnam was a love affair with death, that the war never ends, and that your own country is your enemy." With the political assassinations in the 1960s the dark side of America's domestic conspiracy became visible where "the American public began to suspect, like Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49*, that 'it's all part of a plot, an elaborate . . . *plot*' (31)" (Cowart, *Dark Passages* 87).

1.2. In the Midst of a Long Decade: The American Sixties after Kennedy

Kennedy's election as U.S. President in 1961, in a race against then vice President Richard Nixon, initiated a notable change in the U.S. in many aspects. Moving from the monotonous years of the Fifties to the revolutionary Sixties, the new President's policies seriously interrupted Eisenhower's hand in hand relation with the CIA. This fracture punctuated the beginning of a long decade with unfortunate incidents but also new possibilities for a host of different groups in America. It was a time when the counterculture was emerging, indicating a moment of possibility filled with a revolutionary spirit and the promise of a better America after WW II.

Race, class, and gender issues came to be highlighted through social protests and movements. For example, the Watts riots of 1965 were the culmination of the African-American community's racial problems that caused six days of civil unrest, many deaths, and much property damage. Such was the resonance of the incident that in the article "A Journey into the Mind of Watts," Pynchon criticized white people's attitude who simply ignored the problems of the black people in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. He went on to criticize those programs meant to improve the social and living conditions of Watts after the riots. Although the neighborhood is full of "social workers, data collectors, VISTA volunteers and other assorted members of the humanitarian establishment," Pynchon wrote, in reality not much has changed. He observed that such institutions as The Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency (E.Y.O.A.) are not practical in following their "many projects scattered around the poorer parts of L.A" to reduce poverty. Such an attitude can be read as a criticism of Lindon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty." In his January 8, 1964 State of the Union address, Johnson introduced legislation in which he declared that "Our

aim is not only to relieve the symptom of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it." Nonetheless, as Pynchon mentions, in Watts "There are still the poor, the defeated, the criminal, the desperate, all hanging in there with what must seem a terrible vitality."

During Johnson's Presidency, the countercultural movements in opposition to the government's domestic and foreign policies were becoming more significant. Dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam became one of the major issues amongst young Americans. The youth felt betrayed by their political leaders due to the never-ending military engagement in Vietnam where many American soldiers were killed on a daily basis. This confusion somehow finds expression in *Lot 49*: Pynchon depicts a suburban Republican housewife as the protagonist of his novel. A child of the Fifties, and in her twenties in the novel, just like the author himself while he was writing *Lot 49*, Oedipa becomes aware of the supposedly subversive underground system the Tristero. This new perception in the life of the protagonist, the "secret richness" (106) she has possibly stumbled onto, reminds us of the possibilities that the beginning of the Sixties seemed to promise. However, there is an always already inherent prospect that the subversive energies in the novel are part of the "they" system. Writing in the Seventies, Jules Siegel tells us that back in the Sixties he had asked Pynchon, "'What are you always so afraid of? . . . Don't you understand that what you have written will get you out of almost anything you might get yourself into?'" Siegel describes Pynchon's unvoiced response to his question as "'You think that it is what you have written that they will want to get you for'" (172-74).

Oedipa's recognition of the possible existence of the mysterious postal system the Tristero against the official order of control is what Pynchon would describe as us against them. However transitory, the Tristero underscores the feeling of rupture within the Sixties American society and politics that were determined by a political order of stasis in the previous decade. The possibility of the new energies to live a different life in America, revealed to Oedipa, is like a loophole in the severe grid of control where us gains momentary leverage over them. As Gerd Hurm observes, "the grid is a crucial metaphor" (300) in *Lot 49* because it "signifies order and control and represents the sprawling metropolis of late consumer capitalism." This control is depicted in many forms such as the web of highways, the maze of roads, and the network of communication. Oedipa's nocturnal meditation on Tristero's nature, while lingering in San Francisco, demonstrates transitory revelations in her mysterious encounters with the low lives of the city. It is as though

her new understanding would make way to penetrate into the rigid framework of control which "could be traced … back to the Inverarity estate" (*CL* 106).

Although Johnson went on to move in Kennedy's path, with the rise of the New Right and Nixon's election as President in 1968, there came another change in the political structure and cultural outlook of the U.S. Johnson had inherited an unexpected presidency after Kennedy's assassination in the middle of the Cold War with communist China and the Soviet Union. This situation left him no choice but to engage in the Vietnam War. However, dissatisfaction with American presence in Vietnam was evermore soaring. As one of his presidential campaign promises, in 1968, Nixon declared that "New leadership will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific" (Schulzinger 413). With ramping protests at home demanding an immediate pullout from Vietnam, Nixon put a new strategy into practice known as "Vietnamization," which involved replacing American troops with the Vietnamese soldiers. Consequently, he initiated the withdrawal of U.S. troops in several phases. On April 30, 1970, however, the President publicly announced the ground invasion of Cambodia. Such policies fueled more anger to the young protesters who considered them as an expansion of the conflict. After four students were shot dead in a violent unrest with Ohio National Guardsmen on May 4, Nixon's credibility to enact his campaign promise seemed more volatile. A paranoid man, the President devoted more federal resources to local police enforcement in order to control the social protests and, whenever needed, use violence against the countercultural movements. For example, in a famous press conference in June 18, 1971, the President started his remarks by the following statement, "America's public enemy number one in the United States is drug abuse. In order to fight and defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive." From then onward, the term "war on drugs" was caught on by the media. Tony Payan et al. have argued that the key elements of that war were "eradication, interdiction, and incarceration" (34).

The psychedelic movement was one of the countercultural groups lead by their figurehead, Harvard university psychology professor, Dr. Timothy Leary in the early Sixties. Leary believed in the use of LSD as a way of expanding consciousness spiritually against the oppressive system of political control. He called his method "the politics of ecstasy." A parody of this countercultural figure can be seen in Pynchon's novel through the character of Oedipa's "shrink or psychotherapist" (9), Dr. Hilarius. He calls Oedipa in order to persuade her to join his LSD-25

experiment on suburban housewives. However, later in the novel, he goes crazy. Having participated in an experiment on Jews in Buchenwald during WW II, he is overcome by paranoid delusions. When the cops arrive to arrest him, Oedipa tells her shrink that she had gone to his clinic hoping that he could talk her "out of a fantasy." Hilarius, by now insane, tells Oedipa to love that fantasy. "Cherish it!' cried Hilarius, fiercely. 'What else do any of you have? Hold it tightly by its little tentacle, don't let the Freudians coax it away or the pharmacists poison it out of you. Whatever it is, hold it dear, for when you lose it you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be'" (87). This reminds us of the LSD experiments that Leary promoted in the Sixties. Hilarius believes that only the fantasy is real as if the rest were nothing but illusion. Indeed, the moment you lose it, as he points out, you "cease to be." LSD consumption by the hippies was supposed to offer an alternative way to deal with the problems and conduct a different life-style. In the meantime, Nixon's "war on drugs" continued forcefully insofar as he called Leary "the most dangerous man in America."

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon dedicates one part of the novel to a depiction of Nixon. It is agreed by the critics that Pynchon sympathized, at least, with certain features of the New Left and it is no mystery that Nixon was the resentful figure for those growing groups such as SDS during the 1960s. Writing a blurb for Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS: Ten Years Toward a Revolution*, Pynchon describes Sale's 1973 study as "the first great history of the American Prerevolution … a source of clarity, energy and sanity for anyone trying to survive the Nixonian reaction" (rpt. Mead 44). Luc Herman and Steven Weisenburger argue that the long-standing question about the New Left's decline and death after 1969 is "whether that demise constituted a triumph for the society of the spectacle, for the forces of control and domination" (67). The authors believe that such a triumph seemed already evident in late 1972 when Pynchon was still working on the manuscript of *Gravity's Rainbow*. At the end of the story, Pynchon depicts the character Richard M. Zhlubb, "night manager of the Orpheus Theatre on Melrose" (775) in Los Angeles, as "fiftyish and jowled, with a permanent five o'clock shadow (the worst by far of all the Hourly Shadows), and a habit of throwing his arms up into an inverted 'peace sign'," which is obviously a caricature of Nixon. Manager Zhlubb rides the L.A. freeways commenting on "stoned hippie 'freaks'" (Herman and Weisenburger 67) on the Santa Monica freeway. These "freaks" (*GR* 775) are "all out today" as they "come gibbering in at you from all sides, swarming in, rolling their eyes through the side windows, playing harmonicas and even kazoos, in full disrespect for the Prohibitions." At

the sight of this, the manager says, "There'll be a nice secure home for them all, down in Orange County," which, according to Herman and Weisenburger, foretells a concentration camp. Zhlubb, "pausing then exactly like a nightclub comic," delivers the final blow as he reveals that location, which is "Right next to Disneyland" (*GR* 775).

Nixon's paranoiac policies of surveillance can be expounded through the grid of routes and the maze of highways that are all connected to each other and to Inverarity, from which Oedipa tries to find a way out. The depiction of L.A. freeways in the previous example from *Gravity's Rainbow*, or for that matter in Oedipa's first encounter with the maze of the roads in San Narciso, hints at the policies of the "urbanization of suburbia" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 23) after WW II. The highway construction was boosted first during Eisenhower's Presidency in 1956 when he signed the bill that sanctioned the construction of the Interstate Highway System. Crucial to homeland security during the Cold War, the highway project was designed to facilitate the evacuation of large cities in case of a possible war. However, the "urbanization of suburbia" was used, later in Nixon-Reagan-Bush administrations, in order both to save capitalism and keep the promise of the American dream alive, and also to implement the "diffusion of minority populations" (Soja 206) to keep them under control more easily.

Returning to the aforementioned scene of the "American Martyr" (219) in *Vineland*, it is noticeable that we find the information about Ploce at the base of a pole with an image of the martyr himself on a secret federal highway called FEER, "Federal Emergency Evacuation Route" (216). Darryl, Howie, and Sledge are members of a militant film collective named 24fps who are against the oppressive actions of the government's agents toward the counterculture. As they intrude into the secret route to find their friend Frenesi, they come across the information about Ploce. Although, this scene seems to have to do with the invasion of Cuba by the U.S., the construction of FEER is a reminder of Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System, for the purposes of security and urban evacuation. Nevertheless, in *Vineland* the federal highway is shown to be used only for political purposes by the federal prosecutor Brock Vond under Nixon's administration. The representation of the network of highways and roads, here and in other novels, finds its parallel in the postwar policies of suburban urbanization, as part of the New Right's political agenda.

1.3. The Counterculture as Socio-cultural Reaction to the Politics of the Sixties

The American Sixties witnessed the rise of many countercultural groups and student associations, such as the hippie and the Civil Rights movements, the Black Panther Party, and Students for a Democratic Society, as a response to the repressive politics of the decade. Kennedy's assassination had a huge impact on the political and cultural outlook of the U.S. in years to come. In an unpublished letter, dated April 11, 1964, Pynchon expressed his reluctance to go back to America after the newly elected president's assassination.[3] Writing from Mexico, he tells his friend Robert Hillock that "There is also this matter of Kennedy's assassination, which hit me harder than I will probably ever tell anybody, or even admit to myself." He mentions that he "would feel the same way even if it were Eisenhower who'd got it." The logic, in his words, is that "political murderers should not be part of a civilized democracy, and if they are then something is wrong with the country, and by extension something is wrong with me, and you too." Pynchon says that he is not as struck by Kennedy's assassination per se as he is by its implications within the American society. Indeed, he writes that the assassination is hard on him "not because of how I [Pynchon] felt about him [Kennedy], which as you know was favorable, but because I thought we were through with that kind of crap back when Czolgosz got McKinley." The bigger issue at stake, he explains, is America itself as "a civilized democracy" which Kennedy's assassination has signaled as problematic. He goes on to explain that "If Oswald found it in himself to do what he did, then given the right circumstances, so could we, and that bothers me." Pynchon expresses his disappointment with the way things have developed in America and diagnoses Kennedy's assassination as the symptom of a larger problem which shows "something is wrong" with America as a "country" and "a civilized democracy."

Before going any further, a tentative definition of the 1960s counterculture for the sake of clarity in my discussion is necessary. Interestingly enough, there is no consensus among the critics as to what exactly the term counterculture in the historical context of the 1960s refers to. Theodore Roszak defines it as "a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion" (42). Joanna Freer has argued that this definition does not provide a clear sense of the practical boundaries of so vast a collection of groups and associations in the Sixties America. Having briefly gone over some key aspects of the term, she uses counterculture "as a general term

[3] Pynchon, Thomas. Letter to Robert Hillock, April 11, 1964.

to designate the entire oppositional sixties, inclusive of the New Left, the psychedelic movement, the Black Panther Party, the Yippies, and even the women's movement" (13).

Moving from this standpoint, Pynchon's fiction is full of references to the counterculture of the 1960 in the U.S. In *Lot 49*, Oedipa perceives the existence of novel energies in America which she struggles to make sense of. Her awareness of the possibility of "a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life" (107) is indicative of the possibilities that the early 1960s seemed to offer. A rupture with the Fifties American politics, Kennedy's Presidency sounded very promising to American youth such as the young Pynchon himself. Nonetheless, as Oedipa's never-ending search of the secret postal system does not lead to any definitive solution, the assassination of the young President darkened the horizon of hope for an alternative American society early on in the decade. Reflective of such salient events, Pynchon's novel offers a liminal position with regard to the new possibilities of the 1960. Pynchon's early fiction depicts his interest in the countercultural movements and the possibility that they could fight against and make changes to the official structure. Oedipa's discovery of the underground Tristero organization, as a subversive system against the official order, mirrors the burgeoning hope for change in the Sixties. For example, the non-violent protest approach, adopted by groups such as SDS, reveals itself overtly through "Oedipa's encounter with campus politics on her visit to the University of Berkeley" (Freer 39). This tendency is, more covertly, also present in the W.A.S.T.E communication system which brings together socially marginalized outcasts "in an act of quite rebellion against government monopolisation and control of lines of communication." Freer observes that "such liminal, anti-structural groups" in Pynchon's novel "might pose a real threat to the powerful" which is suggested by his "imagining of their more violent potentialities (something which was to show itself in the New Left later in the 1960s) in his linking of the W.A.S.T.E organisation with the brutally violent historical Trystero courier service."

If *Lot 49*, written almost in the middle of the Sixties, offers a sort of liminal/optimistic position regarding the counterculture, *Gravity's Rainbow*, written in 1973, provides a definitive vision of the declining trend of the Sixties countercultural movements. "*Gravity's Rainbow* is in substantial measure a response to the recent failure of the youth movements of the Sixties, …, demonstrating a far greater attachment to the earlier manifestation" (Freer 45) of the movements associated with the New Left. By the end of the novel, Slothrop finds the information he is looking for about his personal history but is not liberated from his conditioning as an infant and the

oppressive system of control he is trapped in. On the contrary, he becomes disembodied and is "scattered all over the zone" (731). Freer observes that as the novel approaches its end, with a narrative that becomes increasingly incoherent as a whole, Pynchon emphasizes "the potential weakness of love as a basis for revolutionary action" (51) shown in the slogan "An Army of Lovers Can Be Beaten" (162). Love, a key term and a countercultural reference in the latter part of the Sixties, was meant to bring peace. However, an army is inherently capable of violence which is downright against the non-violent, early spirit of the counterculture. Freer concludes that such scenes suggest Pynchon's "dissatisfaction with the militarisation of the movement during the late sixties" and the depiction of the declining late Sixties' counterculture in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

The curbing of the Sixties possibilities, fought for by the countercultural groups against the official structure of power, is further underscored in the ending part of *Gravity's Rainbow* through a parody of Nixon's repressive policies of control. In the novel, Richard M. Zhlubb, the director of the Orpheus Theatre, "has come out against what he calls 'irresponsible use of the harmonica'" (775) and believes that "his queues, especially for midnight showings, have fallen into a state of near anarchy because of the musical instrument." After Steve Edelman, a Hollywood businessman, "attempted to play a chord progression on the Department of Justice list, out in the street and in the presence of a whole movie-queue of witnesses," all others are now doing the same. Herman and Weisenburger observe that, in the Orpheus Theatre part of the final episode, through the windows of "Pynchon's thinly disguised Richard M. Nixon's" (143) "black Managerial Volkswagen" (*GR* 775), the narrator represents "a host of countercultural 'freaks . . . swarming in . . . in full disrespect for the Prohibitions,' and showing most of all their disrespect for the sovereign Nixon." But "Relax," says the manager. He has already thought of "a nice secure home" (776) for these countercultural youth, which is "down in Orange County. Right next to Disneyland." This scene clearly depicts the fading energies of the countercultural opposition by the end of the decade, where Pynchon provides us with a more definitive position in comparison with the liminal/optimistic stand presented in *Lot 49*. As Herman and Weisenburger suggest, "The final irony in *Gravity's Rainbow* is that for all the characters, it is simply too late" (216). For example, Mr. Zhlubb is "rolling down the L.A. freeways … while wrestling with a prophetic dream about smothering in a plastic bag, a sign to him that it's 'too late.'" Not only is it too late for him but "too late as well for all of humanity under the sign of that descending, nuclear-tipped ICBM poised over the Orpheus Theater on the novel's last page."

The counterculture involved, among other things, also a sort of conflict between a generation of men who participated in WW II, "the Greatest Generation," and the generation after them who was against the Vietnam War. These men who had just come out of the Second World War had a different set of values than their children who later initiated the youth countercultural movements of the 1960s against the political establishment and its Cold War policies. For the veterans of WWII material well-being was of utmost importance. Raised in the tough years of the Great Depression, they had learned to work hard and survive. They wanted to provide their children with the comfort of the opportunities, products, and services they were denied during their childhood. Nevertheless, their children were more concerned with ethical values such as equality and civil rights. The generation of the adolescents of the 1950s, which emerged as a political and cultural force in the 1960s, experienced a disconnection from those traditional values of adulthood which they had been bequeathed by their parents. These youngsters began to seriously criticize the dominant culture including the consumerism that had characterized their childhood. Having been raised in the restricting atmosphere of the 1950s, they started to develop a new style of their own which initiated the oppositional movements of the 1960s, indicating a discontinuity with the social and political persuasions of their parents. The generation gap expressed itself in the form of the countercultural groups such as Civil Rights, Anti-War, the Hippie, and the Free Love movements, as well as various radical student associations. This generational transition from the Fifties to the Sixties is evident both in Pynchon's own life as well as his professional career which I shall discuss in the following part.

1.4. The Sixties in Pynchon's Works

Delving into the issues discussed until now, it becomes clear that Pynchon's own life and career were no exception to the 1950s-1960s cultural and political sea change that America was experiencing. In the introduction to *Slow Learner*, he emphasizes the Fifties as a decade of restraint for his generation. He explains how it was considered taboo to write about sexuality and there was "a tendency to self-censorship" (8). He mentions that near the end of his short story "The Small Rain," some sort of "sexual encounter" seems to happen, but it would be impossible to realize it from the text due to a language that becomes so "fancy to read". This, he observes, is perhaps because of "a general nervousness in the whole college-age subculture" about sex. Pynchon apparently didn't enjoy the 1950s: "Youth of course was wasted on me at the time," he wrote with his usual irony. Critics usually agree on the idea that in the introduction to *Slow Learner*, where

Pynchon criticizes his own writing, he might be ironic. This is the case, for instance, when he says in *Lot 49*, "I seem to have forgotten most of what I thought I'd learned up till then" (20). Cowart has observed that "Pynchon comments on his stories … in a tone of bantering self-disparagement" (*Dark Passages* 26). Nevertheless, most critics willingly accept "the rhetorical ploy of the introduction." But even earlier than 1984, in an August 1961 letter written while working on *V.*, Pynchon tells his editor that he didn't "know dick about writing novels yet and need[ed] all kinds of help."[4] However, As Luc Herman has argued, "both the statement in the letter and his later self-presentation in *Slow Learner* can be construed as instances of modesty – false or authentic" (19). In hindsight, Pynchon tells us that as "an unpolitical '50's student" (*SL* 9), he was "working out of a dilemma that most of" those who were "writing then had, in some way, to deal with," which at the most basic level "had to do with language." He explains that there were "many directions—Kerouac and the Beat writers, the diction of Saul Bellow in *The Adventures of Augie March*, emerging voices like those of Herbert Gold and Philip Roth—to see how at least two very distinct kinds of English could be allowed in fiction to coexist." The conflict in those days in its literary form "shaped up as traditional vs. Beat fiction." Although tradition had noticeable leverage, Pynchon elucidates that "Against the undeniable power of tradition, we were attracted by such centrifugal lures as Norman Mailer's essay 'The White Negro,' the wide availability of recorded jazz, and a book I still believe is one of the great American novels, *On the Road*, by Jack Kerouac" (9-10). The young writer enjoyed the new energies brought up by the Beat writers. In effect, regarding his short story "Entropy," he later wrote, "I suppose it is as close to a Beat story as anything I was writing then, although I thought I was sophisticating the Beat spirit with second-hand science" (14). However, his fascination with the Beat movement was "a glancing acquaintance" (10). He relates that in 1956, when he was in the navy, in Norfolk, Virginia, he had gone into a bookshop where he "discovered issue one of the *Evergreen Review*, then an early forum for Beat sensibility" which "was an eye-opener" for him. By the time he got to college, Pynchon "found academic people deeply alarmed over the cover of the *Evergreen Review* then current, not to mention what was inside." As he puts it, "We were at a transition point, a strange post-Beat passage of cultural time, with our loyalties divided." To quote Gordon:

[4] Pynchon, Thomas. Letter to Corlies Smith, August 31, 1961. *Of a Fond Ghoul*. New York: The Blown Litter Press, 1990.

> I connected Pynchon to Kerouac because both wrote about restless post-WW II young Americans. Except that Kerouac's heroes were filled with romantic angst and an unfulfilled yearning to burn like roman candles, whereas Pynchon's were clowns, schlemihls and human yo-yos, bouncing between farce and paranoia. Kerouac was of the cool fifties; he wrote jazz fiction. But Pynchon was of the apocalyptic sixties; he wrote rock and roll.

Another difference, for instance, is in the type of motion and energy that Pynchon's early fiction mobilizes than that of the Beats. The Beats emphasized motion and saw travel as a source able to produce positive energy, "as adventure and exploration" (Freer 21), whereas in Pynchon's fiction movement and travel do not always suggest activity and liberating energies, because travel is "reduced to routine, an access of passivity." Joseph Slade has argued that in *V.* the Yo-Yo is a representation of "motion without meaning or decadence" (73). Indeed, Benny Profane's travels on the subway are nothing more than "yo-yoing", which is traveling in a boring, routine manner, unable to give him any sense of life. The theme of aimless wandering on the subway is also used by Don DeLillo in *Libra*. The very beginning scene of the novel shows the protagonist, the author's version of Lee Harvey Oswald, who rides "the subway to the ends of the city, two hundred miles of track" (1). Just like *V.*'s Benny, *Libra*'s protagonist rides the subway aimlessly "just to ride." In *Lot 49*, Oedipa's ongoing spatial movement to uncover the real nature of the shady organization the Tristero does not produce any positive result in the end. As Freer observes, in this novel instead of "a movement that is clearly directed towards freedom," we have "a movement which is ambiguous … a journey which could lead to a revelation, … or to some more or less straightforward form of destruction" (22). Pynchon's early protagonists, contrary to the characters of the Beat writers, are more characterized by a motion that is static in its nature where their movements are restrained in a grid of systematic confinement from which they seek to find a way out. However, by no means am I suggesting that Pynchon's early fiction lacks subversive, positive aspects. In effect, they are full of countercultural energies against the "they" system. Freer observes that "there can be little doubt that Oedipa, from Pynchon's perspective at least, is in a better position at the end of the novel than at the beginning" (24). The protagonist's new understanding is beyond "a case of either/or," (*SL* 9) which is "an expansion of possibilities." Nevertheless, Pynchon's narrative technique in mobilizing movement, toward a subversive alternative against the static grid of control, is different than that of the Beats.

The passage from the Fifties to the Sixties (and the whole latter decade) was a critical moment in Pynchon's life and literary career. The young author was reaching the full age of adulthood in the Sixties when salient cultural and historical events took place, affecting his writing even in the future years. In *Lot 49*, Oedipa transforms from a suburban republican housewife to a turbulent seeker of a new possibility of living in America. The Fifties were characterized by restrictions and an atmosphere of stasis while the Sixties promised a fracture in that fixed structure. When Oedipa goes to visit Prof. Bortz, first she stops by the Berkeley campus of the University of California where she comes across a totally different atmosphere than the one she was used to as a college student. Oedipa "moved through it carrying her fat book, attracted, unsure, a stranger, wanting to feel relevant but knowing how much of a search among alternate universes it would take" (65). The narrator relates that she "had undergone her own educating at a time of nerves, blandness and retreat," which is the second part of the 1950s. However, "this Berkeley was like no somnolent Siwash out of her own past at all." Although "1957" is recent enough, in comparison her experience of college life was a far cry from what she observes at Berkeley. It was "Another world" (64). In fact, "Writing this, Pynchon is expressing his own direct experience of a change in campus dynamic" (Freer 42). The Sixties Berkeley in the novel is depicted as a place with a higher degree of cultural freedom and political engagement among the students.

At the outset of the Sixties Pynchon and his generation were at "a transition point" (*SL* 10). He explains that "unfortunately there were no more primary choices for us to make. We were onlookers" and "consumers of what the media of the time were supplying us" (10-11). Describing this situation as "a strange post-Beat passage of cultural time," Pynchon observes that the youth of his generation were the spectators of a parade that "had gone by" and they "were already getting everything second hand" as "onlookers" and "consumers" of the media. This recalls Oedipa in the opening page of *Lot 49* "in the living room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube" (1). Having been named executor of the estate of her ex-lover, "a California real estate mogul," Pierce Inverarity, she desperately tries to make sense of his will. She leaves Kinneret, a northern California village, and travels south to San Narciso, a fictional town near Los Angeles, where Inverarity has lots of assets. En route to understanding Inverarity's testament, she comes across a mysterious postal delivery service called the Tristero, which was defeated by the rival postal system Thurn und Taxis in the 18th century. However, the Tristero continued to exist underground up into the present to take revenge. This opens an ever-increasing series of signs and clues as to

what the Tristero mystery might be. In the course of her quest, she often comes across a muted post horn symbol with one loop and the slogan W.A.S.T.E, an acronym for "We Await Silent Tristero's Empire" (116). While exploring Inverarity's testament, she uncovers puzzling coincidences which she thinks might be evidence for the Tristero's existence. However, with the proliferation of the signs and the lack of any hard and fast proof, Oedipa wonders whether the mysterious communication system really exists. This makes her sink into paranoia where she comes to think that the Tristero might be a conspiracy and "a plot has been mounted against" (107) her. It may be just "a practical joke" or perhaps she is simply "hallucinating" these cues, such as the Tristero symbol, the muted post horn, that lead her to this underground network. The novel ends as Oedipa is attending an auction, waiting for the bidding of the Tristero "forgeries" (110), which were supposed to be sold as "lot 49."

Incorporating the shift from the Fifties to the Sixties atmosphere in America, *Lot 49*, as Cowart suggests, is "quintessentially a sixties document" (*Art of Allusion* 29). The novel highlights the possibility of an alternative reality and a subversive system against the official structure in Sixties America through Oedipa's quest. Published in 1973, *Gravity's Rainbow*, too, is a novel that engages with those possibilities of the Sixties. Nevertheless, such indications are only implicit insofar as the narrative is set in the Forties during WWII and only at the end of the novel are we connected to the present. The ending of *Gravity's Rainbow* underscores the generational gap, mentioned in the previous part. In the last part of the novel, Pynchon shows the waning of the countercultural energies through the depiction of a repressive Nixon. However, though late, the representation of the hippies on L.A. highways shows, even if ethereally, the changing atmosphere of the 1960s with countercultural possibilities. As discussed previously, the counterculture included, among other things, a generational conflict between those who were adolescents in the 1950s and their parents. In the ending part of *Gravity's Rainbow*, as the setting moves from WWII to the present L.A, these two spatiotemporal settings bring into contrast a generational gap between the war veterans and their children who were against the war in Vietnam. Indeed, the parody of Nixon in the novel is a suggestion of his inability to end the Vietnam War which made the young generation of Americans dissatisfied with their government.

Vineland's narrative, set in 1984 with Reagan at the beginning of his second term as U.S President, offers another instance of the generational conflict by constantly shifting back to the 1960s and their political and historical events. In his fourth novel, Pynchon's narrator tells us about

the differences that Darryl Chastain (DL) had with her father as she was growing up. DL was a member of the radical filmmaking group 24fps in the late Sixties that documented the oppressive transgressions of Nixon's government to curb the liberties of the hippie counterculture. Moody Chastain had once been "a junior Texas rounder, promoting bad behavior" (103). Then "a sheriff's deputy friendly with the family suggested a choice between the Army now or Huntsville later" as "the war was approaching." Sounding a good opportunity, Moody "went right down and joined up" where he "would have to become a Military Policeman." When WWII ended, DL was born in Leavenworth, Kansas where Moody was assigned to the Disciplinary Barracks. However, he wanted to do something "more personal now" because "he'd come to see bombs, artillery, even rifles, as too abstract and cold." Then he "discovered the judo and jujitsu of the defeated Jap." This was an opportunity for little DL who at the age of five or six "started tagging along with him down to the dojo." Later, skipping school hours, DL started to "go look for an instructor in unarmed combat" and found Inoshiro Sense with whom she started to train herself. Nevertheless, "all her school ditching had become a problem at home" (108). Moody told her daughter, "'I ever find you 'th one 'nem little slant-eyed jerkoffs,' as he expressed it, 'he gets killed, and you get a Clorox douche, you understand me?'" He even called her "Trash, Gook-lover, and, mystifyingly, Communist too." As can be seen, here we observe the generational conflict between a man of the great war and a Fifties child who got involved in the Sixties counterculture.

Looking back at the title of this part, one could say that the Sixties were the stepping stone for Pynchon's successful career. So much so that 24 years after the publication of *Lot 49*, a novel set in the 1960s and the author's own lifetime, in 1990 Pynchon would go back to the Sixties by publishing his second California novel *Vineland*. 43 years later, in 2009, he would still go on to write *Inherent Vice*, a novel about the Sixties and again set in California. However, we can arguably consider *Lot 49* the novel at the foundation of Pynchon's career which best incorporates the feeling of the early years of the 1960s. His first novel *V.* was mostly written in the 1950s when Eisenhower was in office and was not published until 1963, two years before the publication of *Lot 49*. For the young writer who was trying to find his place in the American literary canon, *V.* was a superb practice in crafting a powerful novel where he criticized the cruel historical and imperialist actions of his country abroad. However, in the controversial years of the Sixties, it is *Lot 49* that represents the real turning point in Pynchon's career, which later lead to his magnum opus *Gravity's Rainbow*. In many ways *Lot 49* reflects the political and cultural spirit of the Sixties

America in representing both the new countercultural possibilities as well as the overreaching oppression within the American society. In the novel, the possibility of a redemption in the end is undermined by the absence of a rock-bottom solution. Essential in Oedipa's quest is the dominant role of Inverarity who controls the land and her world from beyond this world. This is a reflection of the general sensation in the Sixties that the governmental policies of control were gradually intruding into the freedom of the daily lives of its people. As in the following chapters we shall see, this points to the fact that Pynchon's imagination of the Sixties has changed in the course of time insofar as both *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* are works of an author who is more nostalgic and less inclined to believe in a future perspective.

2. Inside *The Crying of Lot 49*: Toward a Geocritical Understanding

Drawing on *The Crying of Lot 49*, Robert Tally makes a compelling case for the role of literary works in creating imaginary maps. In doing so, he briefly touches on the scene in the novel where Oedipa decides to read over Inverarity's testament in order to make sense of things going on "in her republic" (112). Suspecting that Pierce might have left "an organized something behind after his … annihilation" (51), she comes to think that perhaps "it was part of her duty … to bestow life on what had persisted, to try … to bring the estate into pulsing stelliferous Meaning, all in a soaring dome around her," much like the "Rapunzel-like" (11) tower depicted in Remedios Varo's painting. Oedipa writes down in her memo book an immensely important sentence in the novel: "Shall I project a world?" Tally argues that "Projecting a world" seems a suitable phrase for highlighting the role of literature "As a means of understanding the world" (*Spatiality* 42). Literature's function, in his view, is to gather the information of life and sort it out based on a certain plan which can help readers better understand and navigate some parts of their world. This role underscores a significant aspect of geocriticism, which aims to understand real world places by recourse to their literary projection. In Bertrand Westphal's words, "geocriticism tends to favor a geocentered approach, which places place at the center of debate" (112). After all, "Geocriticism allows us to understand 'real' places by understanding their fundamental fictionality. And vice-versa, of course. We understand 'fictional' spaces by grasping their own levels of reality as they become part of our world" (Tally, *Geocriticism* X). In this respect, *Lot 49*, and in my opinion a great deal of Pynchon's fiction, qualifies for a geocritical analysis. In the realm of literature and culture, where imaginary spaces "call for new cartographic approaches, new forms of

representation, and new ways of imagining our place in the universe" (*Spatiality* 42-43), I argue that Pynchon's fiction excels in depicting those fictive spatial representations which could be considered as instances of alternative realities in his work.

Essential to understanding my argument is the idea that geocriticism, in my use, is more of a practical approach/instrument at the service of the literary text than a proper "methodology" (Westphal 113) applicable to a vast host of disciplines. This by no means signifies that my analytical approach is limited to the realm of cultural and literary studies. In fact, I intend to bring together and draw on a variety of disciplines and investigate them in the way they interact with the texts that I am going to analyze. Hence, geography, history, politics and similar disciplines are of utmost importance to my study. Nevertheless, taking these into consideration, I am more interested in how, for instance, the geocritical analysis of a given text can contribute to the understanding of the narrative structure than contemplating its theoretical basis. In other words, geocriticism here addresses a fundamental question: How can making sense of real places by understanding their fictionality, and vice versa, be useful in terms of the literary understanding of a text? Implementing geocriticism, we can draw imaginary maps, dig into historical and geographical facts and the background of real and fictional places, investigate their socio-political and cultural status, and even determine the level to which they represent one another. Yet, with all that, the above question still remains in place and must be answered.

Any attempt to define geocriticism in the span of a couple of paragraphs will not provide us with anything more than an oversimplification of its main characteristics. Nonetheless, what is at issue here is something else—how do we apply a geocritical approach to a certain work of literature? In lieu of a theoretical exploration of the "elements of geocriticism" (Westphal 111), I am going to build my discussion on the premise that geocriticism, as an analytical instrument, addresses certain parts and aspects of a text in such a way that our understanding of that narrative becomes clearer.[5] By making sense of the text, it inevitably becomes easier to make sense of our world, the world itself and our places in it. In this sense, when applied to a literary text, geocriticism allows for investigating the ways in which the representations of real and literary places help better understand (or in some cases complicate) the architectural structure of a novel and/or the building and development of its characters. Likewise, trying to understand the degree to which literary

[5] For a nuanced theoretical discussion of geocriticism, see Westphal, Bertrand. *Geocriticism: real and fictional spaces*. Translated by Robert Tally, Springer, 2011.

representations echo and interact with their geographical referents, and vice versa, can serve as a practical tool to shed light on real world places in their cultural, political, and historical complexities.

Taking my cue from this practical understanding of geocriticism, I will cite a number of significant instances from *Lot 49* of how Pynchon's novel is, amongst other things, suitable for a geocritical analysis. For example, analyzed from a geocritical point of view, the fictional city of San Narciso assumes multiple functions. For one thing, it throws light on Oedipa's quest for "a transcendent meaning" (*CL* 114) behind "the hieroglyphic streets" of Inverarity's San Narciso in making sense of the Tristero mystery. For another, it elucidates the significance of certain places in Southern California, possibly Orange County, in the socio-political context of the Sixties America. It is interesting to understand how these places can offer insights into some tropes and issues in the novel. As such, a better interpretation of the overall structure of the narrative in its social and historical context, regarding the possibility of an alternative reality, might become possible.

In this chapter, I aim to investigate Pynchon's spatial imagination in his first California novel from different points of view. In doing so, I seek to analyze how *Lot 49* offers a spatial insight that would qualify the novel for a geocritical analysis. In this respect, I argue that the novel's representation of cityspace can be read through Edward Soja's urban form "postmetropolitan transition" (*My Los Angeles* 21). An analysis of the fictional and political spaces in the novel, through an analogy between San Narciso and Orange County, sheds useful light on the complexities of the narrative structure. Furthermore, I am going to examine whether the concept of "Thirdspace" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 1), in relation to fictional San Narciso, could play a role in explaining the possibility of an alternative reality and understanding the architecture of the narrative.

SECTION 1

2.1. The Spatial Dimension in Pynchon's Early Life and Career

In an article published in 1998, Mel Gussow writes: "In April 1964, Mr. Pynchon tells Ms. Donadio [his literary agent] he is facing a creative crisis, with four novels in process. With a sudden bravado, he says, 'If they come out on paper anything like they are inside my head then it will be the literary event of the millennium.'" Writing about the memories of Mary Ann Tharaldsen,

Pynchon's girlfriend in the mid-Sixties, in an article in 2013 Boris Kachka tells us that Pynchon "often worked on multiple books at once—three or four in the mid-sixties—and a friend remembers him bringing up the subject of 1997's *Mason & Dixon* in 1970." With several novels simultaneously in progress, it is enticing to think that from the outset Pynchon had a good idea of what he aimed to achieve in his literary career. It is this attitude or, better, poetical vision that tempts us to think that perhaps Pynchon was on his way to predict many important processes in years to come within the socio-political and cultural panorama of the American society.

On that score, an important question at the heart of my contention is whether it is possible to track some spatial tropes or patterns in Pynchon's fiction that make possible a geocritical reading of his work. Kachka mentions that Pynchon's "father was Oyster Bay's superintendent of highways and then, briefly, town supervisor (the equivalent of mayor), until he was accused of complicity in a scheme to overpay a road-surfacing company." Similarly, in 1977, Jules Siegel wrote that Pynchon's father "was commissioner of roads for the town of Oyster Bay, Long Island, and Tom worked with the road crews in the summer" (122). If true, that experience might have prepared Pynchon to address spatial themes in his fiction and affected him in the way he would portray highways, roads, streets, cities, urban space, and in general the issue of space in his novels. Luc Herman and John Krafft observe that an early version of *V.* in typescript contained a chapter entitled "Millennium" (14), which was not included in the published version of the novel. They suggest that, in that chapter, Pynchon's description of the road workers on Stony Bridge Lane, "getting drunk, making mischief, wasting time," as well as "city government corruption" might have something to do with his "personal experience as a summer employee, and to his personal knowledge as the son of a local-government official and prominent Republican whose career would in fact be touched by scandal in 1963" (19).

Pynchon was born and grew up in a small town in a suburban area near Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York. Later in California, he lived in suburban places such as Manhattan beach which probably helped him depict such spaces in his work. Indeed, between 1976 and 1977 he might have spent more than a year in "a small redwood cabin in Trinidad, California, separated by 300 feet of trees from the lush, rocky shore of the Pacific" (Kachka). Being "an author on the run," his highly conscientious effort to remain unknown made him move "from Mexico to California, from Texas to London, trying to preserve his anonymity and privacy" (Gussow). Part of his geographical mobility was due to his tendency to hide from the public eye. After he won the National Book

Award for *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon might have gone back to New York from Manhattan Beach. The Shetzlines, whom Pynchon occasionally visited in rural Oregon, remember his unusual lifestyle at their house. As we learn from Kachka's essay, Shetzline's ex-wife Mary Beal recalls "once, at a party out in the woods, a man they knew 'outed Tom as a famous writer.'" Although the people in the area were only country folk who did not read literary novels, "It mortified Tom to the point where he left the following day." Unsatisfied with New York, he wrote in a letter to the Shetzlines that he, together with a girlfriend, might head "across the sea," or probably move back West. "Yes, it does sound like 'aimless drifting,' doesn't it?" wrote Pynchon, as he was moving back and forth around the country like one of his yo-yo protagonists. Pynchon's dissatisfaction made him a restless traveler which gave him the chance to become familiar with different types of land/city-scapes around the world. When in 1955 he left engineering physics at Cornell to enlist in U.S. Navy, "He wrote much later about feeling in college 'a sense of that other world humming out there'—a sense that would surely nag him from one city to another for the rest of his life" (Kachka).

As far as Pynchon's early fiction is concerned, there are significant traces that call attention to his fictional creation and/or representation of urban/suburban spaces. From the very outset of *V.*, we learn that Benny Profane "had been road-laboring" (2) ever since he was discharged from the Navy. Herman and Krafft mention that, in "Millennium," Benny tells a story about "road labor" to his "wannabe girlfriend Fina Mendoza." By "the end of typescript chapter 9," Fina asks Benny about his past: "What was it like on the road (TS 149)," to which he answers with a story about "road labor."

Calling *V.* "an urban novel" (74), David Seed has observed that Benny fails to grasp the significance of his repeated nightmare of a street: "The lights gleamed unflickering on hydrants; manhole covers which lay around in the street. There were neon signs scattered here and there, spelling out words he wouldn't remember when he woke" (*V* 17). He argues that "In such an urban novel, it is not surprising that the street should become an emblem of threatening anonymity" (74) where "Profane fears his own disassembly in this street." A nuanced spatial analysis of *V.* is highly compelling and requires a separate chapter. However, at issue here is Pynchon's detailed description of the urban space and the streets which reinforces the idea that *V.* is "an urban novel."

Pynchon's short story "Low-Lands" offers cues that show, even before writing *V.,* he was aware of the urban development and the changing American cityscape. When Rocco takes Flange

and Pig Bodine to his friend Bolingbroke at the local garbage dump for a place to sleep, Pynchon describes it this way: "the dump was roughly square, half a mile on each side, sunk fifty feet below the streets of the sprawling housing development which surrounded it" (47). While Rocco dumps the load, what strikes Flange is

> this thought that one day, perhaps fifty years from now, perhaps more, there would no longer be any hole: the bottom would be level with the streets of the development, and houses would be built on it too. As if some maddeningly slow elevator were carrying you toward a known level to confer with some inevitable face on matters which had already been decided.

This might suggest Pynchon's interest in the development of the streets, the houses and, in general, the American urban space and its possible effects on the citizens.

Charles Hollander has suggested that in *Lot 49* "the suburban community Kinneret-Among-The-Pines" (74), where Oedipa's home is located, seems to be a "mocking of pretentious Jewish suburbs built on Long island during the postwar boom of the late 1940s and 1950s, when Pynchon was growing up there." While it can be suggested that Kinneret could in fact be "a Jewish neighborhood," Hollander observes that, by locating Oedipa's house in a suburban town, Pynchon might refer to the suburban development on Long Island during the postwar economic boom.

Although it is difficult to say whether Pynchon had recourse to personal experience in depicting Kinneret, there are some similarities between the author and the protagonist of his novel. For one thing, when Oedipa goes to the Berkeley campus to meet Professor Bortz, she realizes that the college culture has changed a lot from when she was a student. Contrary to her college experience in 1957, "a time of nerves, blandness and retreat" (*CL* 65), Oedipa observes the campus "teeming with corduroy, denim, bare legs, blonde hair, hornrims, …, posters for undecipherable FSM's, …, students in nose-to-nose dialogue." Similarly, in the introduction to *Slow Learner* Pynchon mentions his "adolescent nervousness about sex" (8) during the Fifties and "a general nervousness in the whole college-age subculture."

For another thing, Oedipa's "waiting" (*CL* 113) for the revelation of the Tristero, as an alternative reality in the novel, echoes the hopes of Pynchon's whole generation for a better America through the countercultural movements. Pynchon observes that in his early work he felt "an unkind impatience with fiction" (*SL* 19) which he "felt then to be 'too autobiographical.'" He

explains, “Somewhere I had come up with the notion that one’s personal life had nothing to do with fiction, when the truth, as everyone knows, is nearly the direct opposite.” Pynchon’s comment does not provide much in the way of realizing whether his early work is autobiographical or not, for we might interpret his words as both straightforward and ironic. But however one interprets the matter, Oedipa is a suburban, Republican child of the Fifties, as is Pynchon himself, whose father was a “prominent Republican.”

The California suburban town of Kinneret underscores, on the one hand, Pynchon’s awareness of the California suburban space and, on the other, emphasizes the fears and anxieties of a protagonist who is on the verge of some “hierophany” (*CL* 18). Kinneret is the place where Oedipa’s house is located and might be a reminder of where Pynchon himself grew up. The creation of this suburban town helps Pynchon set in motion a quest for the protagonist where she comes across several experiences, in the course of the novel, which resonate with some important historical and cultural events that took place in the Sixties in America. This makes it more plausible to think that Pynchon used real places in his fictional creations, impregnating them with social and historical implications. Regarding *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*, for instance, David Cowart has argued that Pynchon “derives his picture of the place [California] and the decade [Sixties] from personal experience as augmented by a host of popular culture sources” (*Dark Passages* 134).

2.2. From Pynchon’s San Narciso to California’s Orange County

Bertrand Westphal observes that the referentiality operating between fiction and reality is a continuous “oscillation” (86) where we can never pinpoint the exact referent and its representation. The level of correlation between the two can differ in “a modular fashion” (101) from “zero to infinity.” Keeping this in mind, I am going to examine how San Narciso in Pynchon’s novel might represent such places as Orange County in Southern California. Mobilizing my discussion is a sense that Pynchon’s invented San Narciso might signal the onset of certain spatial trends in California during the socio-political transformation of the 1960s. The Watts riots of 1965 marked the beginning of two notable spatial developments, in terms of postmodern theory, which find expression in Pynchon’s novel. First, the “postmetropolitan transition” (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 140) from the modern industrial metropolis to the poly-centered, globalized “postmetropolis”

(*Postmetropolis* 147), along with its social and cultural ramifications.[6] Second, the "crisis-generated restructuring" (*Thirdspace* 23) in the aftermath of the post-World War II economic boom.[7]

2.2.1. Creating San Narciso: Understanding the "postmetropolitan transition"

A trend that in large part initiated the "postmetropolitan transition," "regional urbanization" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 9) is a process that was triggered by the emergence of the "Exopolis" (*Thirdspace* 238).[8] Metaphorically speaking, the "Exopolis" can be described as a spatial construction through which the city turns "inside-out" and at the same time "outside-in" (239). That is, on the one hand, it hints at "the growth of Outer Cities and Edge Cities" (*Six Discourses* 7), and on the other, it points to "a dramatic reconstitution of the Inner City." In simpler words, it refers to the simultaneous "decentralization" and "recentralization" (*My Los Angeles* 97) of the modern metropolis brought about by the "urbanization of suburbia" (23) and the suburbanization of the center.

In *Lot 49*, San Narciso can be described as a sort of "Exopolis." It is the place where Pierce Inverarity has expanded his power and control by speculation in land. He has "put down the plinth course of capital on which everything afterward" has "been built" (*CL* 13). He has brought together many pieces from different parts of the world to create his own version of the city. In order to construct "Fangoso Lagoons" (18), one of his last major housing development projects, he has "decorated" the bottom of "Lake Inverarity" (34) with the bones of American soldiers from the Second World War for the entertainment of scuba divers. Manny Di Presso, a lawyer and a former actor in the novel, explains to Oedipa and Metzger that his client Tony Jaguar brought the drowned bones of the soldiers at the bottom of "Lago di Pietà" (37) in Italy to San Narciso and sold them to Inverarity. Tony alleges that "Inverarity never paid him" for the bones. Inverarity "was scrupulous about payments like that," Metzger notes. He asks which "construction firm" his client worked for and Di Presso explains, "Different highway outfits in the area, ones Inverarity had

[6] For a detailed definition of the "postmetropolitan transition" and "postmetropolis," see, respectively, Soja, Edward W. *My Los Angeles: From urban restructuring to regional urbanization*. Univ of California Press, 2014 and ---. "Postmetropolis Critical studies of cities and regions." (2000).
[7] For the definition of "crisis-generated restructuring," see Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, USA: Blackwell P, 1996.
[8] For thorough definitions of "regional urbanization" and "Exopolis," see Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*.

bought into, they got the contracts." At this point, Oedipa inquires how road builders are permitted to sell the bones when Metzger jumps in, saying, "Old cemeteries have to be ripped up." He explains, "Like in the path of the East San Narciso Freeway, it had no right to be there, so we just barrelled on through, no sweat." Therefore, behind all this bone business there might be Inverarity's highway construction interest. Indeed, Di Presso's comment on Metzger's explanation makes it clear that Inverarity's construction of the highway was assisted by a corrupt system of capital: "No bribes, no freeways." Later in the novel, when Oedipa goes to Genghis Cohen's, he sits her in a rocking chair and offers her "real homemade dandelion wine" (60). Cohen explains that he "picked the dandelions in a cemetery, two years ago. Now the cemetery is gone. They took it out for the East San Narciso Freeway." Pynchon's depiction of Inverarity's unrestrained construction of the Freeway and the development of the California suburban space, farcically done "in most kosher fashion," calls to mind the expansion of coastal areas, such as Orange County, in Southern California during the 1960s.

The secret federal highway FEER, "Federal Emergency Evacuation Route" (*VL* 216), in *Vineland* is another example of the construction of the network of highways and roads in California in the Sixties. After Weed Atman, the de facto leader of the People's Republic of Rock and Roll, is murdered, Frenesi is taken to Brock Vond's "National Security Reservation" through the confidential FEER. This mysterious highway is used for Vond's personal purpose, much reflective of Nixon's repressive policies, in order to arrest and incarcerate the countercultural radicals. The highway construction was started, as it was the case with Eisenhower, on the pretense that it would protect American People from the Soviet threats of the Cold War. Nevertheless, the ever-increasing expansion of the California highway network and its changing landscape served, in large part, the political purposes of the New Right with Orange County as the "center and symbol of American conservatism in the 1960s" (McGirr 17). In fact, *Vineland*'s narrator recounts that FEER was "conceived in the early sixties as a disposable freeway that would only be used, to full capacity, once" (*VL* 216).

To take another example of how Pynchon depicts fundamental change in the California cityscape during the Sixties, we can think of Oedipa passing by Yoyodyne Inc. in San Narciso. When she looks down onto "the ordered swirl of houses and streets" (*CL* 13), she thinks of them as producing the same "astonishing clarity" of the electric circuit when she had opened a transistor radio. "The vast sprawl of houses" could be considered as a form of the

urbanization of the peripheral city and a hint at the "dispersal and decentralization" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 206) of Los Angeles through the "urbanization of suburbia." Deciding to stop at the next motel, Oedipa wonders "what the road really was" (*CL* 13). She refers to the image of the California road as the "illusion of speed, freedom." The highway offers solely a mirage of an "unreeling landscape." What, indeed, the highway construction was meant to do was reinforcing the state power and control as well as serving the capitalist interests of the wealthy. Oedipa thinks that the road is "this hypodermic needle, inserted somewhere ahead into the vein of a freeway, a vein nourishing the mainliner L.A., keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain" (14). The road is the ligament that connects San Narciso, and other peripheral places, to Los Angeles for its capitalist benefits, to keep it "happy," by facilitating the circulation of power and capital from the periphery to the center. The fragmented outgrowth of San Narciso, constructed through the web of highways, "nourishes" urban Los Angeles and protects it from "whatever passes, with a city, for pain." This can be related to the narrative structure insofar as Oedipa too awakens from a suburban life and moves toward a bigger world in which she meets the reality of life in Inverarity's America. As Stephen Hock has argued "the freeway in *The Crying of Lot 49* appears juxtaposed with the web of commerce and repressive political power that Pynchon associates with modern capital" (208). Through the grid of the roads, suburban areas such as San Narciso sustain metropolitan L.A. and are, in turn, sustained by the westward development of the city; a process that can be described as "postmetropolitan transition."

The center for such conservative economic and political policies of the Republicans in the 1960s was Orange County. Emphasizing the importance of the conservative beliefs and doctrines of Southern California, as early as 1969, Kevin Phillips suggested that "perhaps no other political impetus in the nation is so important as the middle-class upheaval of the Sun country, and Southern California in particular" (435). Pynchon's fictional San Narciso might represent those important bases of Republican ideology in Southern California, such as Orange County, in the 1960. As such, it is worth doing a geocritical analysis of the historical and political characteristics that San Narciso might share with these places.

Soja argued that until the1960s, Orange County was being developed only by the "decentralization" (*My Los Angeles* 85) of Los Angeles. From then onward, with the onset of the "recentralization" of Los Angeles, suburban "low-density" cities started to grow even more. "Decentralization" and "recentralization" lead to the urbanization of once suburban Orange

County and the suburbanization of the once monocentric modern metropolis of Los Angeles.[9] As a result of these processes, the "postmetropolis" (*Six Discourses* 1), a new urban form of the modern metropolis, emerged.

In *Lot 49*, Pynchon's narrator tells us that "like many named places in California" (13), San Narciso "was less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts—census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei, all overlaid with access roads to its own freeway." The idea of San Narciso as "a grouping of concepts" has several significant implications. First, it underscores the fleeting quality of Oedipa's revelations, scattered all over San Narciso, regarding the shady postal system the Tristero. Not being "an identifiable city" highlights the artificial quality of Inverarity's city, who represents the capitalist interests of wealthy tycoons that went hand in hand with the New Right policies of privatization. Under these policies in later years, not least during Reagan's terms as Governor in the Sixties and later U.S. President, the rich minority could literally construct such giant structures as the ones in San Narciso. As John Miller has suggested, San Narciso is "a conceptual edifice" (227) that Inverarity is constructing "on the land" and can be considered as "one example of the act of 'projecting a world.'" In fact, "San Narciso was a name" (*CL* 111). Nevertheless, as a place where most of Oedipa's revelations take place, it does not provide her with any definitive solution insofar as the meaning of Inverarity's will remains a conundrum to her.

Second, "a grouping of concepts" (13) scattered and "overlaid" around the land is a reminder of at least two of Pynchon's characters who become scattered and disembodied in the end. In *V.*, the mysterious female "V." cannot be tracked down as she is "a remarkably scattered concept" (180) with "pieces" "all over the western world." Similarly, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Tyrone Slothrop becomes disembodied and "Scattered all over the Zone" (731). This conceptual San Narciso together with these disembodied characters might show Pynchon's "heterogeneous vision of America; a vision which is pervaded simultaneously by both a sense that America has failed as a New Project and infinite hope in its possibilities" (Kolbuszewska 221).

Third, overlooking San Narciso for the first time Oedipa senses an intimation of meaningful order. However, as she moves to street level things do not seem to follow any spatial order. When she exits the freeway, she proceeds "onto a highway she thought went toward Los

[9] For a detailed definition of the urban patterns "Decentralization" and "recentralization," see Soja, Edward W. *My Los Angeles: From urban restructuring to regional urbanization*. Univ of California Press, 2014.

Angeles" (*CL* 14). But she finds herself in "a neighborhood that was little more than the road's skinny right-of-way, lined by auto lots, escrow services, drive-ins, small office buildings and factories." Oedipa passes through a town that seems to be a zoned assemblage of taxable entities. This California town, like San Narciso, seems to be "a grouping of concepts" put together as one of Inverarity's projects. As Robert Fisher has observed, the subject of the work of Pynchon's *Lot 49* is "the more recent form of the postindustrial city" (258). He suggests that the novel "reflects the entropic fragmented metropolis."

San Narciso as "a grouping of concepts" (*CL* 13) reinforces the idea of "Exopolis," which is a salient component in the formation of the "postmetropolis." In Pynchon's fictional city, different parts are independent and scattered all around. This description is significant because in the aftermath of the "postmetropolitan transition" centrality becomes ubiquitous and the center-periphery distinction, in terms of urban importance, loses ground. Regarding the representation of cityspace in fiction, Richard Lehan has provided a theoretical sketch of Fredric Jameson's and Jean Baudrillard's postmodern approaches to the city where he explains that whereas one "spins us centrifugally out" (280) of the city the other draws us "centripetally into it." In other words, Lehan argues that, "in neither case is there a center the mind can hold." Justin St. Clair has observed that "in the early fiction of Thomas Pynchon—*V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)—Lehan finds the same theoretical approach to the city" (124). This translates to the idea that these novels propose a different understanding of cityspace and urban planning. Sharing the quality of ubiquitous centrality with the "Exopolis," I argue that there is some degree of interference between San Narciso and certain Southern California places such as Orange County in the 1960s.

2.2.2. A Historical Analogy between San Narciso and Orange County

With the understanding that both San Narciso and Orange County could be, respectively, fictional and actual instances of the "Exopolis," a historical analysis of how they compare with each other seems compelling. San Narciso is "a California defense industry town" (Hollander 81) where the conservative missile production company Yoyodyne and the "right-wing Peter Pinguid Society" (*CL* 77) are situated. Mark Greif observes that "Yoyodyne Inc., the enormous defense contractor in Pynchon's fictional world, is a titan of bomb making" (229) which is a reminder of the aerospace industry in Orange County. A city near Los Angeles, san Narciso is the place where the real estate mogul Inverarity has a share in every development plan and structure. He had

explained to Oedipa that "part of being a founding father" (*CL* 14) was to own a large part of such a giant of "aerospace industry." Inverarity's goal is to exert power and control on the land insofar as San Narciso, and America itself as Oedipa later suspects, is becoming his own legacy. John Miller has suggested that "San Narciso seems to be located in the Simi Valley, north of Los Angeles, where the defense contractor Rocketdyne, the model for Pynchon's Yoyodyne, had a testing center in the 1960s" (228). Pynchon's fictional town is the base for those "giants of the aerospace industry" (*CL* 14), such as Yoyodyne, as "an anchor of the new conspiratorial and paranoid right-wing culture of the greater Los Angeles area's Orange County, where aerospace development and libertarian Republicanism grew side by side" (Greif 229). Whether or not it represents Orange County, San Narciso is very much symptomatic of the New Right policies that used urban restructuring projects for the capitalist profits of the wealthy as well as keeping working class Americans under social control.

Mark Greif suggests that as Oedipa becomes more and more aware of "the fabric of Orange County in the mid-1960s and its dark underweave" (242) she becomes "furious with the Volkswagen Beetles she sees everywhere on the state's freeways and cloverleafs: 'She drove savagely along the freeway, hunting for Volkswagens' (CL49, 150)." Greif overtly suggests that Oedipa's location is Orange county. In the novel, Oedipa's immediate location after the mention of Orange County is "a phone booth" (*CL* 110) in a midnight scene where she finds herself "in a desolate, unfamiliar, unlit district of San Narciso." The narrator wonders what "the probate judge" would "have to say about spreading some kind of a legacy among them all, all those nameless" (113)— perhaps something about the Tristero's secret. "He'd be on her ass in a microsecond, revoke her letters testamentary, they'd call her names, proclaim her through all Orange County as a redistributionist and pinko." In the space of a couple of lines, the narrator reminds us that we are again in San Narciso. Thus, the only way in which Greif's observation would make sense is if San Narciso resembles Orange county in terms of the socio-political abuse of power through the spatial policies of urban development.

Orange County was shown as the promise of the realization of the American dream during Nixon's presidency. Similarly, San Narciso is the place where Oedipa for the first time perceives some revelations: "So in her first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding" (13). From the first moment, Oedipa feels "an intent to communicate." Nevertheless, like Orange county, it is filled with military bases. Pynchon's

fictional mapping reflects on California's history of geographical development at a time of socio-cultural crisis when America was experiencing a decade of upheaval in many different respects. The creation of this imaginary city provides Pynchon with a powerful instrument to challenge the political making of that geographical history. Drawing on Baudrillard, Soja argued that the implementation of "simulacra" (65) in Orange County served the political purposes of fraud. Indeed, Nixon greatly contributed to the transformation of Orange County into "a haven of real estate based on the idealized image of California" (Westphal 89). This transformation was a process of the urbanization of the California suburbs that was initiated in the Sixties, with a significant boost in the Reagan era. As a result of the simulation of reality that promised the American dream, the so-called "scamscapes" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 274) of fraud were created.[10] These fraudulent spatial constructions drastically changed the suburban Orange County, as it was going under the policies of urban restructuring for political purposes of the state and its capitalist interests. In *Lot 49*, Inverarity is the typical real estate tycoon who has created such a fantastic simulation of reality at "Fangoso Lagoons." We learn that at the bottom of the lake "lay restored galleons, imported from the Bahamas; Atlantean fragments of columns and friezes from the Canaries; real human skeletons from Italy; giant clamshells from Indonesia" (18). These are all exotic images that promise not "an-Other" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 10) reality but a simulation of it. In other words, Inverarity is creating his personal version of San Narciso by transforming the Californian suburbia. In fact, he is "projecting" an entire new world of his own devising on the Southern California landscape. These similarities, I believe, sanction a comparison between San Narciso and Orange County in terms of their historical and political backgrounds.

2.2.3. Reading Pynchon's San Narciso through Geocritical Lenses: Understanding *The Crying of Lot 49*'s Narrative Structure through Fictional and Political Spaces

I sought to show how San Narciso in the historical optic of the controversial Sixties America, as indicative of some of the important urban transformations in California, represents the Orange County experience. It is, likewise, important to realize how such an analogy can contribute to understanding the narrative structure as far as Oedipa's quest for an alternative reality is

[10] For a more complete definition of "scamscape," see Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, USA: Blackwell P, 1996.

concerned. On the one hand, San Narciso highlights that moment of crisis in the ordinary life of a suburban housewife who, having to execute her ex-lover's will, comes across the mysterious Tristero organization and the possibility of "an-Other" reality. In *Smoking Dope with Thomas Pynchon*, Andrew Gordon wrote, "The time was ripe, America was ours, and we were going to change the world: Paradise Now or Apocalypse Now" (167). This is a time when the youth counterculture was taking shape. Throughout the Sixties, America was going through a socio-cultural upheaval and experiencing a time of crisis both abroad at war with Vietnam and at home dealing with surging dissatisfaction in the form of the anti-Vietnam War movement, the civil rights movement, the Gay Liberation movement, and many others, who were rioting on America's streets. During that decade, Orange County was a safe house, so to speak, for Republicans and their conservative policies. In 1968, Nixon became U.S. President as the candidate of law and order and new leadership in the Vietnam War. His repressive policies, such as the war on drugs, clashed with the goals of the countercultural movements. Indeed, both Nixon and Reagan in the Sixties saw the university as a threatening enemy and tried to curb the power of the student movements and the professors. As we know from the declassified Nixon White House tapes, in a conversation on December 14, 1972 Nixon told his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, that "The press is the enemy. The establishment is the enemy. The professors are the enemy. Professors are the enemy. Write that on a blackboard 100 times and never forget it." Obsessed with these "enemies," he repeated the word "professors" twice. In *Vineland,* there is such a clash between the forces of the federal prosecutor Brock Vond and the students at the People's Republic of Rock and Roll under the leadership of a mathematics professor who is murdered on the campus. On the importance of the decade, Cowart suggests that "Pynchon thinks of the sixties as a crossroads of American history, a place where the nation revisits the earliest of its moral choices" (*Dark Passages* 134). However, "In *Lot 49* (the only sixties novel actually published in that decade), this struggle remains undecided." In the end, Oedipa still has to pass the interim she finds herself in, to be illuminated about "the Tristero 'forgeries'" (*CL* 110) that are "to be sold, as lot 49."

This transition might be positive or negative. A third alternative might come true or not. The auctioneer on the last page of the novel, the priestlike figure Loren Passerine in the company of men in "black mohair" (115) with "pale, cruel faces," appears to be threatening, perhaps with some bad news for Oedipa. He seems "like a puppet-master" with a "relentless" smile "as if saying, I'm surprised you actually came." But, on the verge of revelation, Oedipa and the reader are left

hanging. Joseph Slade has argued that in *Lot 49* Pynchon "perceives the emerging forces of postindustrialism" (55) because "America and its industrialism have reached an impasse." He suggests that "only new and charismatic energies can forestall entropy and redeem America's democratic promise." Since these energies are novel, Oedipa is unable to tell whether they are good or bad. In the ending pages of the novel, she comes to wonder whether she is only paranoid and has been played with by Inverarity or in effect there is meaning behind the hieroglyphic streets and the proliferation of the Tristero signs. Slade concludes that Oedipa, a child of the 1950s, does not, and cannot, know of a transition in America; "she merely senses crisis." Looking at the historical and political context of the 1960s America, the geocritical analysis of San Narciso in Pynchon's novel and Orange County in California provides intriguing insights. It underscores the transitory characteristic of the Tristero revelations throughout Oedipa's quest and a moment of crisis in the life of its protagonist, on the cusp of some revelation and probably an alternative reality, that America herself was going through during the Sixties.

On the other hand, places such as Orange County, in hindsight, show us the Sixties as a transitory moment of promise and hope in America. The postwar economic boom brought many people into the area, "making Orange County the new frontier West of the second half of the twentieth century" (McGirr 39). Many entrepreneurs and construction company owners found infinite opportunities to try their chance by investing their capital in the increasing growth of the region. These new possibilities revived the American dream for many in Orange County. However, the private business owners and real estate companies detested the regulating role of the federal government, which became a significant factor in favor of the New Right later in the decade. With Nixon, and later Reagan, in office, it was easier for the entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and profits. Policies of urban restructuring were promoted in Southern California regions, such as Orange County, by the state in order to create a fantastic, simulated image of hope and possibility for the nation and, at the same time, implement policies of social control through the "diffusion of minority populations" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 206). Soja argues that "crisis-generated restructuring" was used by the New Right administrations both to save capitalism and the promise of the American dream after the economic failure of 1973-1974 and also, "as a means of subordination and social control" (*Postmetropolis* 152), to keep riots such as Watts under surveillance. These took place through neoconservative Republican policies, including the expansion and restructuring of the suburbia. The birthplace of Nixon and the most significant of

California counties for Republicans, Orange County heavily underwent urban restructuring, throughout the Sixties and thereafter, through the stereotypical utopia-promising images of Hollywood and the Malibu beaches advertisements.

In Pynchon's novel, the real estate mogul Inverarity has extensively expanded his construction business in San Narciso and decorated the land with promising and idealized images of reality that can be seen at "Fangoso Lagoons" at the bottom of the lake. Such a fantastic simulation of reality goes very well together with the ideals of the New Right, among which privatization and small government were prominent. Oedipa is shown something beyond the mere established image of reality, which might be a new "mode of being" (McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* 106) other than the "zeroes and ones" (*CL* 113) in the "matrices of a great digital computer" where she is entrapped, or perhaps only an "illusion." Indeed, "Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth." However, the more Oedipa digs into Inverarity's testament, the more she feels paranoid and trapped in the complicated network of his assets, perhaps America herself, from which there seems to be no way out. As Amy Elias has argued, Pynchon invokes paranoia "as the only hermeneutic compatible with a world in which social systems are run by powerful but protected and secretive global tycoons, multinational corporations and military-industrial conglomerates" (126). San Narciso seems to offer, and simultaneously undermine, the very possibility of a better life for the protagonist. Only the Tristero, if in fact subversive, could redeem Oedipa's dream.

Oedipa's sense of entrapment in Inverarity's San Narciso and the hope that the Tristero quest would lead to an alternative world might reflect some of the revolutionary historical events in 1960s America. It could also represent the state's policies, such as "crisis-generated restructuring" through the "urbanization of suburbia" in Orange County, to keep the population and their revolutionary energies under control through the "dispersal and decentralization" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 206) of Los Angeles. "Crisis-generated restructuring" was started after WW II. However, with the Watts Riots of 1965 as a signal of the beginning of the end of the postwar economic boom, it was facing a serious problem. The "urbanization of suburbia" through the construction of the "Exopolis," including Orange County, was a "spatial fix" (Harvey) to that problem.[11]

[11] For the full definition of "spatial fix," see Harvey, David. *Limits to Capital*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.

During the Reagan era, the urbanization process was particularly speeded up in order both to safeguard the modern capitalist metropolis and to exert social surveillance over people. In 1966, the Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan became governor of California. Reagan had a severe conservative attitude toward the counterculture and university protests. Once, for instance, he expressed his opinion about a group of protesters who were holding signs that said "Make Love Not War" in this way: "The only trouble was they didn't look like they were capable of doing either. His hair was cut like Tarzan, and he acted like Jane, and he smelled like Cheetah."[12] Regarding campus protests, Reagan argued that it was a "guerilla warfare" and the only way to win that war was to "eliminate them by firing the faculty members and expelling the students." Casey Shoop suggests that Reagan "came to personify so inimitably" (62) what he calls "the Californianization of American politics and culture," as part of the paranoid politics of the New Right. This new politics, he argues, created a "condition of living in a postmodern world saturated with competing image projections" with Reagan, a former Hollywood actor, as "the dream-life of capitalism." This brings us to the concept of "simulacrum" which is "an exact copy of something that may never have existed" (Soja, *Six Discourses* 10). The Tristero just like the Dark figure in Varo's painting might, or might not, be there. It can be described in terms of an interstice or a liminal space inside real space as though it did not exist. It is an invisible system of communication that can be seen only by certain people who belong to the WASTE. The dark figure is there at the center of the painting on the verge of revealing something to Oedipa, and us readers, but at the same time it is blocking from view something that Pynchon refuses to share with us. What in fact is available is an image of that reality. During the Nixon-Reagan years, the simulation of reality in places such as Orange County was used to create a world of make-believe for the nation and execute the New Right's political agenda. Considering the historical and political context, the Orange County-San Narciso geocritical analysis highlights Oedipa's fantasies for "Another mode of meaning behind the obvious" (*CL* 114) through the Tristero quest and her fear of being left with nothing but Inverarity's all-consuming machine "America."

SECTION 2

2.3. An Analysis of Thirdspace in Pynchon's Fiction

[12] Transcript of CBS Reports: "What about Ronald Reagan," Dec. 12, 1967, Miscellaneous Speeches and Scripts, 1964-74, Reagan Papers.

According to Tharaldsen, shortly after Kennedy's assassination Pynchon went back to Mexico City, where he "wrote all night, slept all day, and kept mostly to himself. When he didn't write, he read—mainly Latin American writers like Jorge Luis Borges, a big influence on his second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*" (Kachka). We also learn that Pynchon translated Latin American writers. Interestingly enough, he was fascinated by Borges who wrote significant short stories such as "The Aleph." This reminds me of Soja's use of the concept of the "Aleph" as a starting point to interpret the "imbricated conceptualizations of Thirdspace" (*Thirdspace* 54). The "Aleph" as the "space that contains all other spaces" is similar to Thirdspace, which incorporates, and goes further beyond, both the First and Second spaces. Given Pynchon's fascination with Latin American writers like Borges, and his "influence" on *Lot 49*, it might be possible that Pynchon would have used some insights from his works, like "The Aleph," in crafting his own novel.

Drawing upon Soja's theorization of Thirdspace, in an essay on *V.*, Paolo Simonetti suggests that "We can say that Pynchon's Malta becomes a Thirdspace" (164). The aim of Simonetti's analysis, in realizing the significance of "the Malta location" (156), is primarily "to understand the ironic function of the epilogue," so as to propose "an alternative interpretation of the V-structure that dominates the whole novel." Along the way, however, he briefly touches upon Malta as a sort of Thirdspace that brings everything together: "subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 57). Equipped with this understanding of Thirdspace, as a combination of many inseparable spheres, Simonetti goes on to suggest that Malta becomes "a place that allows no separation between history and mythology, biography and fiction, and that resists every attempt to be cracked, explained, understood, represented" (164). Simonetti's argument can be further supported by the fact that in the epilogue of *V.* the narrator describes Malta as a place where "all history seemed simultaneously present" (481). This brings to mind Borges's "Aleph," a point where simultaneously all points converge. In the "Aleph" the narrator sees "the earth and in the earth the Aleph and in the Aleph the earth." In essence, what he sees in the "Aleph" is the world. "In Valletta remembrances seemed almost to live." (*V* 481). History is all present and alive there. Pynchon's Malta is a place where every point in history seems present at the moment. With a nod to Simonetti's analysis, Malta, as a place that brings all history together simultaneously in one

point, can be well an example of the "Aleph" and the "Aleph," as Soja informs us, that of Thirdspace. Malta becomes a Thirdspace in Pynchon's novel.

Lot 49's chapter 3 opens with a reminder of Oedipa's first minute in San Narciso where she had felt as if "there were revelation in progress all around her" (27). The narrator relates that "Much of the revelation was to come through the stamp collection Pierce had left, his substitute often for her—thousands of little colored windows into deep vistas of space and time: savannahs teeming with elands and gazelles, galleons sailing west into the void, Hitler heads, sunsets, cedars of Lebanon." Pierce's stamp collection is like many "colored windows" that open into different times and places. It brings various spatiotemporal settings together, as though trying to contain history, which is supposed to reveal something to Oedipa. Therefore, it is suggestive of some hidden meaning which nevertheless, like the elusive Lady "V." or the mysterious Tristero, is fleeing from us. A miniscule world of many other worlds, the stamp collection, like Thirdspace, encompasses and at the same time goes beyond all other spaces.

Monica Spiridon has argued that "The urban area of San Narciso, where Oedipa keeps strolling almost randomly day and night, bears a perfect analogy with the theoretical model of a so-called Third Space" (199). However, she does not expound how such an analogy is possible. She explains that "As defined by Edward Soja – who seeks to understand spatiality as it is simultaneously perceived, conceived and lived – a Third Space is both a meeting point and a melting pot of group recollections." Suggesting that "the twentieth century Californian metropolis San Narciso" (198) is "a fictitious equivalent of Los Angeles," she observes that "Contemporary Los Angeles is currently identified by cultural geography, by urbanism, by architecture, by the visual and the verbal arts as a Third Space" (197). Although I would hesitate to conclude that San Narciso is specifically a fictional representation of Los Angeles, I do find it intriguing that Spiridon discusses San Narciso in terms of Soja's Thirdspace and, in my view, it is compelling that this analogy be explained in detail.

2.3.1. An Attempt at Reading Pynchon's San Narciso through Thirdspace: The Search for an Alternative Reality in *The Crying of Lot 49*

The "postmetropolitan transition" shows the way in which our old spatial knowledge and epistemologies are being challenged, changed, and backgrounded. Bertrand Westphal has argued that in the modern era the map is "an icon of the macroscopic representation of space" (59), which

is to suggest that such a map is fixed and static. In terms of postmodern geographical ethos, however, the map represents a space that is not definitive, as is not our knowledge of existence. For instance, the formation of the "polynucleated" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 10) "postmetropolis" evinces the foregrounding of new ontological ways of spatial organization that is moving toward globalization by deconstructing the old center-periphery division in the modern metropolis.

In the final pages of *Lot 49*, Pynchon often emphasizes the need for a third alternative. Oedipa comes to thinks that the only options are the "ones and zeroes" (114). Frank Kermode has noted that ultimately Oedipa finds herself caught between the fear of two extreme possibilities. The problem in her world is that there might be a total but malevolent order or no order at all.[13] As we learn from the Courier's Tragedy, up to a certain point "the naming of names" (*CL* 44) has always been either literal or metaphorical. However, Oedipa's quest is directed toward a third possibility that would be other than these two. In that particular moment in the Courier's Tragedy "things really get peculiar, and a gentle chill, an ambiguity, begins to creep in among the words" and "a new mode of expression takes over." Tony Tanner sees this "new mode" as existing "between the literal and the metaphorical" (178). Whether the Tristero can provide that third possibility or is nothing but part of the system itself, Oedipa desperately craves for an alternative option.

Thirdspace as "the assertion of an alternative envisioning of spatiality ... directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 163). In Pynchon's novel, San Narciso might represent any place in Southern California and suggests how the spatial construction of the modern metropolis is being changed. Historically, it could refer to the conservative policies, and capitalist interests, of the New Right that changed the California landscape during the Sixties in America. Pierce Inverarity stands for the conservative policies of Republicans' base, Orange County, in the Sixties such as privatization and real estate development. As he claims he is "the founding father" of San Narciso. Pynchon questions the history of land development policies in California, and America, through the imaginary San Narciso. After all, as Richard Rodriguez has put it, California is "America's America" (273). The "urbanization of suburbia," in the service of capital and state power during the 1960s, transformed "much of the American landscape into a relatively undifferentiated type of residential space, one that erased the physical features of local history" (Millard 73). The modern

[13] See bibliography, page 137.

city was going through a phase of change: "the country for health, aesthetics, and recreation, the city for commerce, sociality, and convenience." The development of the peripheral city San Narciso underscores the fragmentation of the California suburban space which could be considered as indicative of the "postmetropolitan transition."

Near the end of *Lot 49*, the narrator recounts that Oedipa "had dedicated herself, weeks ago, to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that the legacy was America" (111-112). What Oedipa tries to find is "some American essence" (Cowart, *Dark Passages* 134) and California, as the end of the frontier, is the place that might, or might not, grant it. She seeks "another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land" (*CL* 113). Oedipa "had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided" (114). She wonders "how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity?" This nostalgic reflection on the possibilities in the past, which no longer seem to hold true in America, is like a trope to which Pynchon often goes back in his novels. As it has been suggested, it might be said that Pynchon's writing moves toward "two divergent, but not too different directions" (Simonetti 6): "the great, encyclopedic, proliferating exploration of a (more or less) remote past, and the more intimate memories, between fact and fiction, of a recent past—roughly 1958 to 2001 (the years of Pynchon's own adult life)" (6-7). Therefore, the past is a highly important issue in Pynchon's oeuvre.

Oedipa's reflection on the bygone possibilities in America's past connects us to several significant moments across Pynchon's work. For instance, in *Mason & Dixon* he depicts America as a promising land with infinite possibilities that is, nevertheless, being transformed into a place under the control and hegemony of the British rule in its colonies. The surveyors Mason and Dixon draw the line, dividing Pennsylvania from Maryland, that will carry their name. Working under contract for the king of England to enact their mission in America, they contribute to an act of changing "all from subjunctive to declarative, reducing Possibilities to Simplicities" (*MD* 334). America's open space is shown as the symbol of "subjunctive Hopes" where "'tis not yet mapp'd, nor written down, nor ever, by the majority of Mankind, seen." This free space is being measured and exploited for the profit of Britannia. Pynchon's meditation on America's past mobilizes an alternative possibility in order to show its open space as having the potential of "diversity" (*CL* 114) in Oedipa's words, as opposed to the overreaching order of homogeneity that serves "the ends of Governments" (*MD* 334). In a 1969 letter to Thomas Hirsch about his use of South-West African

materials in chapter 9 of *V.*, Pynchon expresses his concern that "the number done on the Herero head by the Germans is the same number done on the American Indian head by our own colonists" which is done through "the imposition of a culture valuing analysis and differentiation on a culture that valued unity and integration." Pynchon highlights the systemic exclusion of modes of being other than the official metanarrative of colonial powers that imposes its standardizing hegemony on its subjects.

Incorporating the First and Second spaces, the real and imagined, Thirdspace as "thirding-as-Othering" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 5) is a space that is not limited to or somewhere in between them. It is a combination of the "Firstspace" (10) – real places in the material world – and the "Secondspace" – the imaginary representation and interpretation of real places – and draws on both while going beyond them. As such, it is "an-Other" space that is "transgressive" (Westphal 37) and calls to think of spatiality in innovative ways. This "thirding-as-Othering" is meant to create a space that would include new "choices" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 5) in interpreting and understanding the spatiality of our lifeworlds.

Regarding *Lot 49,* Cowart argues that "The overarching symbol of marginalization, a collective Other in this novel, is the Tristero" (*Dark Passages* 61). He observes that "Oedipa discovers a kind of exploded version of this Other in the disaffected groups that seem to replicate endlessly all around her." In his view, "In a way, Pynchon's whole program in *Lot 49* is to expose this forgotten reality, this seldom visible but always present America." This "collective Other" as a unique entity, which includes all the "disgruntled," "disinherited," and the marginal people, might offer an alternative "mode of being" beyond the established ways of thought and the binary options in the narrative. A salient characteristic of Thirdspace is that it encompasses "a multiplicity of perspectives" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 5) without "privileging one over another." "Thirding-as-Othering," opposes "any attempt to confine thought and political action to any two alternatives, by interjecting an-Other set of choices." Trying to overcome "the agony of the real," in Baudrillard's words, Oedipa is looking for meaning in a world that is permeated by the proliferation of Tristero signs which has made the "distinction between the authentic and the simulated" impossible. In her nocturnal lingering in San Francisco she comes across a host of muted post horns which are indicative of the WASTE system. The members of WASTE have deliberately chosen not to communicate by U.S. Mail which is "a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic" (*CL* 78). We are told that the withdrawal is "private" and "unpublicized" for "they could not have

withdrawn into a vacuum." Therefore, "there had to exist the separate, silent, unsuspected world" where they could continue to resist and show, to Oedipa and the reader, "a counterculture operating in the interstices of official power and lines of information– a counterculture made up of preterites and losers, a group for whom Pynchon reserves, throughout his work, most of his sympathy" (Berressem 169). This is perhaps a reminder of Pynchon's own withdrawal from the capitalist American society which he would later criticize in *Against the Day*.

Nevertheless, this act of withdrawal could be in itself an alternative way of life in a world controlled by private interests of such tycoons as Inverarity. It challenges that either-or condition of "exitlessness" (*CL* 107) and "absence of surprise to life" in Inverarity's America which Oedipa craves to get rid of by making sense of the Tristero revelations. Although in a different and less convincing manner, in *Vineland*, too, the withdrawal of a group of the Sixties youth and its counterculture into a Northern California county might be considered as an act of silent resistance to an oppressive system of control that alienates its singularities and forces them to conform to its standards. In a review of Brian Jarvis's *Postmodern Cartographies*, Seed has observed that Pynchon's fiction "'explores the possibilities of waste as a redemptive force' by narrating progression into the marginalized spaces of American culture" (523-524). *Lot 49*'s ending does not reveal whether or not the Tristero is truly a subversive system capable of taking on the capitalist world of San Narciso and America. However, this marginalized retraction of the WASTE members, I argue, could be considered in itself "a real alternative" (*CL* 107) reality in the novel. This alternative possibility manifests itself to Oedipa silently and enigmatically, as do the Tristero signs, but in a persistent manner.

If it is true that the WASTE members consider themselves "disinherited" and forced to isolation, because of the monopoly of Thurn and Taxis against the Tristero, it is, too, a "calculated withdrawal." The important word here is "calculated" because it reinforces the possibility of considering the withdrawal of the WASTE community as an alternative way of being, in the heavily ordered and determined world of "ones and zeroes" (*CL* 114). We might say that the act of withdrawal is a conscious choice, rather than merely being forced to withdraw from a world monopolized by U.S. Mail or a wealthy "California real estate mogul" (1) named Inverarity. The narrator tells us that these individuals, waiting for "SILENT TRISTERO'S EMPIRE" (106) and deliberately communicating by WASTE system, were denied many things in American society but if there is one thing they definitely own is the withdrawal: "Whatever else was being denied them

out of hate, indifference to the power of their vote, loopholes, simple ignorance, this withdrawal was their own" (78). They have chosen to withdraw into their "separate, silent, unsuspected world." As the silent Tristero has gone underground and vowed to revenge itself on its illegitimate rival at some point in the future, the WASTE members, too, have withdrawn into silence. However, they are persistent in their act of withdrawal.

Oedipa wonders if "she'd be hounded someday as far as joining Tristero itself, if it existed, in its twilight, its aloofness, its waiting. The waiting above all; if not for another set of possibilities … to accept any San Narciso … then at least, at the very least, waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down, to go skew." (113-114). In order for an alternative reality to take place in the land, the WASTE members wait and so should Oedipa. The withdrawal, and "The waiting above all," might lead to what she is yearning for ever since she saw the Courier's Tragedy: "a symmetry of choices to break down." An alternative possibility through Tristero's subversive energies might emerge which, if not substitute the all-encompassing forces that have always ruled the land but at least, could mobilize an included middle, so to speak, that would transcend the deep-rooted hegemony of "That America coded in Inverarity's testament" (113). In this sense, the withdrawal is a "thirding-as-Othering" that might offer a Thirdspace in the novel and challenge the established ways of life in capitalist San Narciso.

Analyzing these ignored, marginal forces in the novel's California suburbs makes it easier to conceive of an alternative reality in a closed system, i.e. America, that has left no room for imagination. Oedipa's encounter with the old sailor is a transitory moment of relief when she is "overcome all at once by a need to touch him" (*CL* 79). Feeling "insulated" (11) in a world where communication is impossible, it is as though she wanted to hang on to this moment which seems to offer her some genuine compassion and love, with the old man crying in her arms. The old sailor, who has a tattooed post horn on the back of his left hand, asks her to deliver a love letter for him "under the freeway" (79). In doing so, she realizes that mail can be posted in containers that most people consider as waste cans. Delivering the old man's letter, Oedipa might finally have participated in the W.A.S.T.E. system and the Tristero. But if the Tristero is only a conspiracy or part of her paranoia, she has still taken part in an alternative network of the alienated, the isolated, and the periphery through the night streets of San Francisco.

Her dance with the "deaf-mute delegates" (82) at a party in a hotel lobby is another miraculous moment. A few drunk men take her to the ballroom where she is seized by a young

man to dance. “Each couple on the floor danced whatever was in the fellow’s head.” Oedipa wonders how long it would go on before any collisions happen: “There would have to be collisions” but none come. Astonishingly, “She was danced for half an hour, by mysterious consensus, everybody took a break, without having felt any touch but the touch of her partner.” She thinks this is what “Jesús Arrabal would have called it an anarchist miracle.” He had told her that a miracle is “another world’s intrusion into this one” through which “the soul’s talent for consensus allows the masses to work together without effort, automatic as the body itself” (75).

In these instances, the suburbs, the periphery, the anarchists, the marginalized, and the “Preterite” (*GR* 116) are a collective entity that allow for the explanation of an alternative space in the novel. These might be best described as moments “under erasure” (*Postmodernist Fiction* 99) to use Brian McHale’s worlds. The culmination of such moments is the scene when Oedipa asks Driblette why he felt differently about the Trystero than Wharfinger. Driblette, unwilling or not knowing how to answer, says if he were to “dissolve” (*CL* 49) and “drain” into the Pacific, what Oedipa had seen that night, “that little world” on stage, would have vanished, too. When Oedipa inquires why he has modified Wharfinger’s original play, he says that he is “the projector at the planetarium” and “all the closed little universe visible in the circle of that stage” is his very own product and projection. This indicates that an alternative world might exist, but at the same time, like Driblette’s projection, it could vanish. After all, Oedipa’s big question is whether she shall “project a world” by bestowing life on Inverarity’s will and creating meaning, on her own, out of a hodgepodge of cues that all lead to the Tristero.

Chapter Two

Vineland

1. Introduction

1.1. From the Eighties to the Sixties Again: America's Postwar Political History During the Nixon-Reagan Years

One of the salient characteristics of Ronald Reagan's Presidency was the new economic policy known as Reaganomics. Small government and deregulation were the key factors in Reagan's economic policy which were intended to decrease the federal income tax by reducing government regulation and control the growth of government spending to reduce inflation. Reagan's new policy based on supply-side economics holds that economic growth can be most effectively created by stimulating business through lowering tax rates on business and by decreasing regulation of corporate and financial activities. However, it has been argued that "Supply-side is 'trickle-down' theory" (Stockman) itself.[14] The idea is that by giving tax cuts to the wealthiest individuals and largest enterprises, the expenses of corporations are reduced, and thus the savings and the good effects "trickle down" to the rest of the economy and reach everyone else. While Reagan's economic policy has been employed by one administration after another, it has been criticized as only benefiting the wealthy and widening the gap between the rich and the working class. Famously called "voodoo economics" by George H. W. Bush, Reaganomics is an important issue in Pynchon's *Vineland*, where we can observe a subtle analysis of the way it has affected American people's lives.

In Pynchon's novel, one day in 1984, as Frenesi Gates is sitting in the kitchen of her apartment drinking a cup of coffee, she receives a call from her husband Flash who tells her about a list of people whose files are removed from the federal government's computers, including their own. Frenesi and Flash are informers for the government and receive a monthly check for the

[14] See Greider, William. "The Education of David Stockman." *160 YEARS OF ATLANTIC STORIES*, The Atlantic, Dec. 1981, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1981/12/the-education-of-david-stockman/305760/?single_page=true.

snitch job they do. The removal of their files from the government's computers means that they will no longer receive their monthly pay check. As they are having lunch and thinking about the possible reason for this action, their child Justin mentions that "Maybe they all got their budget lines axed out" (78). Surprised by Justin's remark, Flash asks his son what he has been hearing. Shrugging, he answers, "Keep tellin' you guys, you should watch MacNeil and Lehrer, there's all this budget stuff goin' on all the time, with President Reagan, and Congress? It's on now, if you're interested." By then, Frenesi and Flash's payments are interrupted which, as Justin suggests, has to do with Reagan's budgeting policies. Lunch finished, with her husband and son, Frenesi goes out to a community known as Gate 7 on the freeway to cash a check she has just received from a U.S. Marshall at the door of her apartment before lunch. After half an hour of queuing, they tell her that she is not authorized to cash the check. The acting manager informs her that "This is a government check" (79) and "you cash checks from the base." The base check is "in the federal building downtown." Nervous and angry, Frenesi drives downtown and reaches a supermarket. "It was there, gazing down a long aisle of frozen food, out past the checkout stands, and into the terminal black glow of the front windows, that she found herself entering a moment of undeniable clairvoyance, rare in her life but recognized" (80). It is in the supermarket that

> She understood that the Reaganomic ax blades were swinging everywhere, that she and Flash were no longer exempt, might easily be abandoned already to the upper world and any unfinished business in it that might now resume ... as if they'd been kept safe in some time-free zone all these years but now, at the unreadable whim of something in power, must reenter the clockwork of cause and effect. (80)

At that "moment of undeniable clairvoyance," Frenesi realizes that she and her husband are no longer protected by the federal government and "Someplace there would be a real ax, or something just as painful, Jasonic, blade-to-meat final — but at the distance she, Flash, and Justin had by now been brought to, it would all be done with keys on alphanumeric keyboards that stood for weightless, invisible chains of electronic presence or absence." At the click of a key on a government computer, their lives would be protected or endangered as if the "patterns of ones and zeros" were the "patterns of human lives and deaths."

Pynchon's novel abundantly provides the reader with scenes that reflect the politics of a bygone decade and its effects on the lives of ordinary people. For example, at one point in the

novel the narrator tells us that under Reagan's administration "the State law-enforcement apparatus" (305) has taken total control of everything to the extent that it is "calling itself 'America'." This is indicative of the militarization of America during Reagan's Presidency. When he became President, Reagan allocated more funding for the military as part of his political program through his new economic policy. However, the important issue here is whether such policies as increased military spending, widespread tax cuts, and the deregulation of domestic markets benefited the American middle and working classes. In this respect, we can observe the impact of Reagan's policies on the lives of people in the novel, for instance, through the boring, monotonous life of Frenesi and Flash:

> They had both been content to leave it that way, to go along in a government-defined history without consequences, never imagining it could end, turn out to be only another Reaganite dream on the cheap, some snoozy fantasy about kindly character actors in FBI suits staked out all night long watching over every poor scraggly sheep in the herd it was their job to run, the destined losers whose only redemption would have to come through their usefulness to the State law-enforcement apparatus, which was calling itself 'America,' although somebody must have known better. (305)

There is no "redemption" in the lives of those like this couple. In fact, all they can do is to leave things the way they are and follow their lives in the manner the government has foreseen for them. "The State law-enforcement apparatus" has become so powerful that it has militarized all of the country, "calling itself 'America'". Characters like Frenesi and Flash are "destined" to be "losers" whose lives might be redeemed only if they prove to be useful to America's law-enforcement system. In this "Reaganite dream," the "poor scraggly sheep" are always watched and controlled by "character actors in FBI suits." Indeed, the FBI is surveilling the lives of these poor people as it runs them like a herd of sheep. Elsewhere in the novel, we learn that the ex-hippie Zoyd Wheeler, who lives in Vineland in Northern California, "had come to consider the 'legal system' a swamp, where a man had to be high-flotation indeed not to be sucked down forever into its snake-infested stench" (309). Confirming Zoyd's idea, his lawyer Elmhurst "cheerfully admitted that this was the case."

Yet, another important shaping element of the Eighties America was a sort of political continuity with the Nixonian policies of the late Sixties which significantly affected the American

nation. In *Vineland,* Pynchon oftentimes goes back to reflect, usually nostalgically, upon the 1960 America and Richard Nixon's repressive policies. With Nixon in office the Sixties were almost over, not only the decade but also the hippie counterculture and its ideals. In such moments, we can observe a continuity between the past and the present in the novel as though the memory of the past haunted the present. As the narrator relates, "for Frenesi the past was on her case forever, the zombie at her back, the enemy no one wanted to see, a mouth wide and dark as the grave" (64). The memory of the Sixties is very much part of Frenesi's life in the novel's present. She is always thinking about her child "Prairie, last seen as a baby smiling half-toothless at her, trusting her to be back that evening as usual, trying to wiggle out of Zoyd's arms, that last time, and into Frenesi's own" (61). In effect, "When the sixties were over, when … the outlines of the Nixonian Repression were clear enough even for the most gaga of hippie optimists to see, it was then, facing into the deep autumnal wind of what was coming, that she thought, Here, finally — here's my Woodstock, my golden age of rock and roll, my acid adventures, my Revolution" (64). Nevertheless "Come into her own at last," we learn that, in Nixon's America, Frenesi's life became "a world of simplicity and certainty no acidhead, no revolutionary anarchist would ever find, a world based on the one and zero of life and death. Minimal, beautiful. The patterns of lives and deaths." Contrary to some of her acquaintances who have "no problem at all with the past," it is precisely the past that controls her present. Whereas for them the Sixties are over and it is enough "to get by in real time without diverting precious energy to what, face it, was fifteen or twenty years dead and gone," for Frenesi there is no escape from it.

When Darryl Louise Chastain, Frenesi's friend, meets Prairie for the first time at Ralph Wayvone's daughter's wedding, Prairie tells DL the story that her father and grandmother would recount to her about her mother. According to Zoyd and Sasha, Frenesi "made movies for that Revolution" (89) that her generation's youth "tried to have, she was on the run, … until the feds found out where she was and she had to disappear — go underground." Facing a dilemma whether or not to tell Prairie what she knows, DL goes on to tell her the truth about the federal prosecutor Brock Vond who "had his own grand jury back then" and his system of control and repression. Through this character we can notice references to the Sixties countercultural movements and Nixon's policies to curtail and contain them. DL mentions that back then the federal law-enforcement agents "were all over the place, popping antiwar people, student radicals, getting indictments, including at least one against your mother." Interestingly enough, she believes that

even in 1984 under Reagan's administration that system of oppression is continuing: "There's no statute of limitations, so it's still in force." Therefore, there is still a continuity of the Nixonian repression at present. These scenes from the novel clearly, and in a rather nostalgic fashion, mirror the fading of the countercultural possibilities in the Sixties America with the onset of Nixon's Presidency as well as its long-lasting effects on the American society well into the Eighties during Reagan's Presidency.

The repressive actions of the federal agent Vond represent the Nixonite-Reaganite restrictive policies of socio-political control and surveillance. In the turbulent Sixties, Brock fought against the youth oppositional movements and, as Ralph tells DL, "He figures he won his war against the lefties" which is in fact when the New Left started to weaken. Having curbed the hippie counterculture, in the 1970s, Brock went on to further contain the social and cultural liberties of that generation as he saw "his future in the war against drugs" (113). Indeed, another prominent issue in the Sixties-Eighties continuum is the war on drugs. Speaking with Ernie and Sid, two film-making partners in the novel, Hector Zuñiga, a DEA agent, coins the title "Drugs — Sacrament of the Sixties, Evil of the Eighties" (293) for the film project he is working on. Early in the novel, Hector asks Zoyd to turn in people who sell drugs and occasionally shows up at the door of his house. However, Zoyd frequently fails to do so: "Now and then he would get fooled on some minor dope purchase … and he'd feel really tempted … to turn the dealer in to Hector. But there were always good reasons not to — it would happen that one was a cool person who needed the money, another a distant cousin from the Middle West, or a homicidal maniac who would take revenge, so forth" (23). The narrator recounts that

> Each time Zoyd failed to inform on these people, Hector grew furious. … The edge in his voice was frustration, everything about this Gordita assignment was just really fucking frustrating, all these identical-looking beach pads beginning to blend together, resulting in more than enough mistaken addresses, early morning raids upon the innocent, failures to apprehend fugitives who might have only fled across an alley or down a flight of public steps. (23)

Elsewhere, Hector tells Zoyd that they want to bring Frenesi "up out of her mysterious years of underground existence, to make a Film about all those long-ago political wars, the drugs, the sex, the rock an' roll, which th' ultimate message will be that the real threat to America, then and now,

is from th' illegal abuse of narcotics?" (46-47). These examples are a reminder of Reagan's war on drugs and the way it influenced the American people who were "innocent."

1.2. The Sixties Counterculture in the Age of Reagan: Retrieving a Disillusioned Desire in Vineland

Although *Gravity's Rainbow* touches upon the possibilities that appeared in the 1960s and the hope of an alternate America for the nation, it also shows the fading trend of the countercultural energies and the hippie movement. Written 17 years after *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Vineland* too shows the disappearance of the Sixties oppositional groups. Brock Vond's plot to kill Weed Atman, who for the most part is in charge of the People's Republic of Rock and Roll, depicts the weakening of a counterculture that "has retreated after the death — or should one say the assassination? — of the spirit of the 1960s revolution" (Berressem 36) from urban Los Angeles to a rural part of Northern California. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, there are references to the Sixties opposition and the counterculture where California could be imagined as a symbol of possibility. At the same time, however, the ending scene of the novel, titled "Descent," undermines that setting as a magic place with infinite possibilities because "the pointed tip of the Rocket" (780) reaches the fictional Orpheus movie theater in Los Angeles and threatens to take the world with it. In *Vineland*, Pynchon further contemplates the fate of that generation of American youth in the 1980s under Reagan's government through his policies of repression and surveillance. For example, driving in Vineland, Zoyd and his friend Mucho Maas reminisce about the Sixties when there were not many federal restrictions on what they did. Even if there were some, they did not care because the government could not do much about it. Looking at each other, Mucho confirms what Zoyd has been saying about the general feel of the decade:

> Uh-huh, me too. That you were never going to die. Ha! No wonder the State panicked. How are they supposed to control a population that knows it'll never die? When that was always their last big chip, when they thought they had the power of life and death. But acid gave us the X-ray vision to see through that one, so of course they had to take it away from us. (271)

This is a nostalgic vision of the Sixties when the hippie movement was thriving and the government could not have total control over the counterculture, which is why "the State panicked." They both agree that, in the face of such unprecedented, novel socio-cultural energies, the government was

alarmed and did its best to control, restrict, and surveil the youth movements. Th emergence of various anti-Vietnam, pro-civil rights youth protests and the direction they were taking could not be tolerated. So, when Nixon took office he reacted sharply against these countercultural groups. One of his restricting policies was that of war on drugs which gained substantial importance in the 1980s when Reagan became President. Mucho goes on suggesting that the government people "Give us too much to process, fill up every minute, keep us distracted, it's what the Tube is for, and though it kills me to say it, it's what rock and roll is becoming — just another way to claim our attention, so that beautiful certainty we had starts to fade, and after a while they have us convinced all over again that we really are going to die. And they've got us again." His point is that in order to control and weaken the youth energies, the government distracts them by keeping them busy with TV as a political tool. The addiction to the Tube is a reminder of the drug addiction and hence Reagan's war on drugs. Nevertheless, albeit Pynchon mentions the war on drugs and Reagan's policies in that respect several times, the real goal is less explaining the problem of drugs in the Eighties American society than taking advantage of it as a political instrument and "a touchstone or gauge of governmental repression" (Cowart, *Dark Passages* 99). Being repressed and continuously controlled, "that beautiful certainty" (*VL* 271) they had about their values during the 1960s starts to disappear and in the end the government even makes them believe that they do not count and "really are going to die."

The attenuated energies of the counterculture in the novel can be understood also in relation to the larger structure of the narrative. *Vineland* recounts the story of Frenesi Gates, a radical in the 1960s who was a member of a militant film collective named 24fps that sought to document the oppressive transgressions against the counterculture and the hippie ideals. Moving constantly between the Sixties and the novel's present in 1984, we come to know other characters surrounding Frenesi in the past and the present whose lives are greatly affected by her actions. She betrayed the group, became a government informer, went into hiding, and abandoned her husband Zoyd Wheeler and her young daughter Prairie. The novel's opening shows Zoyd who lives with Prairie, now 14-year-old. He becomes aware that Brock Vond, the federal prosecutor who is chasing his ex-wife, is targeting Prairie as a way to find her mother. Back in the Sixties, Brock was the person who convinced Frenesi to betray her friends which led to the fall of the People's Republic of Rock and Roll, initially the College of the Surf which declared independence from the U.S. To escape Vond, Zoyd sends Prairie away where she meets up with DL, a ninja and an old friend of Frenesi.

As in the previous novels, in *Vineland* Pynchon mobilizes the theme of the quest where Prairie embarks on a trip, so to speak, to find the real story about her mother and eventually meet her in person. Through DL, she learns about her mother's radical activities in the late sixties and her love story with Brock who turned her into a government informer. At the end of the novel, all of the main characters get together in Vineland at the large annual reunion of Frenesi's extended family, from which Vond is excluded. Trying to kidnap Prairie in a helicopter, the narrator tells us that the funding for his secret program is cut and he is hauled up. The novel ends somewhat ambiguously as Prairie wishes that Brock would come back and carry her away.

Although once again Pynchon sets in train the theme of the quest in the novel, the pattern of the quest has been modified. As David Cowart brings to our attention, "Instead of a Herbert Stencil, an Oedipa Maas, or a Tyrone Slothrop in search of a master key, one tends in *Vineland* to encounter characters in pursuit of assorted modest grails" (*Dark Passages* 96). That is, the goal of the quest for Prairie, and other characters for that matter, have become more mundane and immediate rather than some alternative possibility or order of organizing the characters' world. In the same fashion, one could argue that what has remained from the Sixties countercultural energies is more of a memory than a real possibility in the Eighties. Setting in motion such modified quests in *Vineland,* Pynchon indicates a governmental conspiracy and a militarization of the American society that not only have devoured the oppositional energies and the promises of the 1960s but have also been constantly policing their remaining traces. Indeed, in Pynchon's fourth novel one can observe the play of the "dialectic of radicalism and repression from the sixties to the eighties" (Cowart 98) by evoking the counterculture, on the one hand, and the Reagan Revolution, on the other. However, that Sixties radicalism "has been bought out" (105) by the dominant political apparatus and "tamed, integrated, assimilated" into the government's system of power.

1.3. 1990: A New Stage in Pynchon's Work

An important issue, among many others, that indicates a change in Pynchon's work from *Gravity's Rainbow* to *Vineland* is family. For the first time, Pynchon seriously explores family issues in *Vineland,* a novel that he dedicated to his parents. First of all, through the characters of his novel Pynchon criticizes Reagan's policies about family. To Zoyd, these programs are nothing but another plan to surveil and control the American households. Sitting at a table in the rear of the restaurant at Vineland Lanes, Hector asks him about his daughter. Zoyd's answer shows

perfectly how the federal people are snooping on the American citizen's private lives: "Yes, Hector. What about her? I really need to hear some more federal advice right now about how I should be bringin' up my own kid, we know already how much all you Reaganite folks care about the family unit, just from how much you're always in fuckin' around with it" (29).

With the theme of family comes also that of love. Zoyd remembers the day he got married to Frenesi. On their weeding day, sitting together on a bench under a fig tree

> A breeze had come up and begun to move the leaves of their tree. 'Frenesi, do you think that love can save anybody? You do, don't you?' At the time he hadn't learned yet what a stupid question it was. She gazed up at him from just under the brim of the hat. He thought, At least try to remember this, try to keep it someplace secure, just her face now in this light, OK, her eyes quiet like this, her mouth poised to open. (35)

Pynchon got married to his literary agent, Melanie Jackson, in the early 1990s when the novel was being published. Certainly, such reflections in the novel are a nostalgic reminder of those countercultural values and movements of the 1960s such as Free Love. However, the above scenes, about family and love, might also have something to do with Pynchon's own marriage and fathering a son in 1991. *Vineland*'s narrative is the craft of a writer who is at a different stage of life than the one he describes in the introduction to *Slow Learner*. As Cowart puts it, "*Vineland* announces phase two of Pynchon's literary career" (*Dark Passages* 94) insofar as "the literary energy that shaped Pynchon's work in the Sixties and Seventies seems to be flowing into fresh channels. Something new is going on."

Criticizing his short story "Low-lands," Pynchon considers it "more of a character sketch than a story" (*SL* 11). In the course of the story, the character Dennis Flange "remains static." Although when he wrote it, Pynchon thought this character "was pretty cool," in 1984 he mentions that Flange is a typical representative of the American males who are "wearing suits and holding down jobs," but "are in fact … still small boys inside." In the story, such a man "wants children … but not at the price of developing any real life shared with an adult woman." As a matter of fact, "his solution to this is Nerissa, a woman with the size and demeanor of a child." Pynchon observes that perhaps it is easy for the reader "to say that Dennis's problem was" the author's own problem and that he "was putting it off on" the fictional character. But however one interprets the matter, he maintains that "the problem could have been more general." In fact, we learn that this

is because at that time Pynchon "had no direct experience with either marriage or parenting." Nevertheless, so comprehensive and vast is the range of issues in Pynchon's fiction that the theme of family has been much addressed elsewhere, notably in *Against the Day* and *Bleeding Edge* (and, though marginally, also in *Mason & Dixon*).

Related to the issue of family in *Vineland* is also the question of alternative realities in the novel. In *Vineland*, attention to this topic can be noticed above all in the Traverse-Becker family reunion at the end of the novel, where all characters except Brock are included and presumably redeemed. Hanjo Berressem observes that with that ending scene, it seems that "Pynchon puts his hope in the next generation" (42). One can read the valorization of the family reunification and the renewal of the triangular mother-daughter relationship as a possible redemption. Nonetheless, Prairie's final thought about the FBI agent Vond complicates any redemptive conclusion. Hanging in the air above Prairie in a helicopter, Brock comes to grab her, telling her that his real father is not Zoyd. For a moment Prairie feels paralyzed but soon comes to her senses and shouts at him "Get the fuck out of here!" (325). She yells in his face, "you can't be my father, Mr. Vond." In the span of a few pages, however, she seems to become indifferent to Brock's actions. Indeed, she wishes that he would take her away. Lying in her sleeping bag in the meadow and looking steadily into the night she whispers, "You can come back" (332). "It's OK, rilly. Come on, come in. I don't care. Take me anyplace you want." Margaret Lynd believes that the emphasis on the female characters, even as protagonists, cannot be considered as a matriarchal redemptive solution in the narrative. She observes that Prairie, just like her mother, is tempted to be seduced by power. Indeed, her final call to Brock might be a signal of the seduction to be coopted by the corrupt system of power in Reagan era, as it has been the case with Frenesi's betrayal of the 1960s revolution. This makes it difficult to properly decide if the ending family reunion is a real redemption or a comedic one. For Lynd, the family gathering together with the fact that Prairie and her dog are safe is good enough to suggest that "none of Pynchon's novels foreground the possibility of redemption as clearly as does *Vineland*" (31).

Whatever the case, the narrative of Pynchon's fourth novel deals to a great extent with the issue of family, which connects with a number of other important themes in the text, including the question of a possible redemption. The possibility of an alternative solution in the novel can be investigated also in *Inherent Vice* where the heroin-addicted character Coy Harlingen is reunited with his family in the end. By analyzing the issue of alternative realities in these novels, through

certain themes such as family, we can better understand the development and growth of Pynchon's work in the course of time.

2. Reading *Vineland*: An Attempt at a Geocritical Exploration

The extraordinary success of *Gravity's Rainbow* and a hiatus of some seventeen years afterward had created such an atmosphere of high expectations that the publication of Pynchon's second California novel in 1990 left some critics disappointed. These Pynchon aficionados did not find the novel on a par with the monumental *Gravity's Rainbow*. For instance, in an article in 2013, Boris Kachka mentioned David Foster Wallace's disenchantment with Pynchon's novel: "He wrote to Jonathan Franzen that *Vineland* was 'heartbreakingly inferior' and that 'I get the strong sense he's spent twenty years smoking pot and watching TV." In an early review, John Leonard suggested that *Vineland* was "a breather between biggies" (93).

However, as the years went by, scholars dug more deeply into the multifarious layers of meaning in the novel and began to appreciate it the way it deserved. As Cowart observes, "Even if one must admit that *Vineland* falls short of the extraordinary work of Pynchon's early career, it remains a remarkable achievement" (*Dark Passages* 110). I too believe that *Vineland* holds a special place in Pynchon's oeuvre: for one thing, it was the new much-expected novel of the author of *Gravity's Rainbow* – though it was published seventeen years after his magnum opus. This span of time between the two novels indicates a new stage both in his life as well as his career. As we have seen, Pynchon married in the same year that *Vineland* was published and had a son a year later. He even "told friends he was seeing a lot more of his parents." (Kachka). This is very significant for a writer who has been trying to remain out of the public eye all along his career. In fact, *Vineland* marks a turning point in Pynchon's writing and literary career. As it has been suggested, "Pynchon seems to have a German period, a post-German period, and a neo-Continental or global period. During his German phase he produced his first three novels: *V.*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Gravity's Rainbow*. His next work, the long-awaited *Vineland***,** represents a new phase in which the almost obsessive attention to German mores seems to have faded" (Cowart 59). Pynchon's fourth novel is roughly located in the middle of his career because it was written, respectively, 17 years after *Gravity's Rainbow* and 7 years before *Mason & Dixon*. Furthermore, it is his first novel after the publication of *Slow Learner* in 1984 where, for the first and only time in his career, Pynchon critically reflects on his own writing.

Most importantly, *Vineland* is the second novel set in California, after his successful *The Crying of Lot 49*, and it presents some of the same concerns expressed through Oedipa Maas's quest of the shady Tristero organization. Issues and tropes such as the hippie counterculture of the 1960s, life in America and its meaning, the Vietnam War, control and anarchy, and the roads and the highway prevail in *Vineland*. All of these issues make it a particularly intriguing novel worth due attention and analysis through a geocritical approach in its multifaceted structure and meaning.

As we read *Vineland*, we frequently come across fictional places in the novel such as Vineland County and Gordita Beach. At the same time, we encounter many alternative worlds such that of the Thanatoids and the *woge*. My purpose is to analyze the ways in which fictional places in the novel refer to certain urban as well as politico-cultural trends from the Sixties to the Eighties America. In doing so, I am going to examine whether the creation of these spaces is part of a bigger spatial pattern in the trilogy. Focusing on the 17-year interval between *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Vineland*, I provide a brief analysis of the reasons why Pynchon's second California novel shows the beginning of a new stage in his career. In this respect, an examination of the urban pattern "postmetropolitan transition," in relation to the fictive city of Vineland in the novel, helps understand how Pynchon's spatial view of city structure moves in a different direction from *Lot 49* to *Vineland*. Through a geocritical analogy between the imaginary College of the Surf and Trasero County in the novel and California's Orange and San Diego Counties, the development of historical and political spaces in Pynchon's fiction in the course of some 24 years becomes clear. Concentrating on the concept of Thirdspace, I further investigate whether the novel suggests an alternative reality, which can be useful in explaining the formulation of the narrative structure and its meaning. Toward this end, I explain the significance of mythological spaces in the novel in order to portray the change in Pynchon's understanding of mythical places at this point of his career.

SECTION 1

2.1. From Pynchon's Early Career to *Vineland*: The Seventeen-year Gap and Pynchon's Spatial Imagination

In *Lot 49*, Pynchon shows California as a place with possibilities, although they are not easily accessible. Oedipa's quest for the mysterious postal system the Tristero seems to be reflective of positive energies in America. However, her research is characterized by an ongoing

struggle to make sense of the Tristero signs as well as Inverarity's will. Published in 1966, Pynchon's novel depicts its protagonist's awareness of some source of novel energy which is a reminder of the possibilities that, at least, the first half of the 1960s, in the socio-cultural panorama of the American society, seemed to offer.

Oedipa's drifting at night on the streets of San Francisco seems to finally unfold to her some meaning about the WASTE system. When she mails the old sailor's letter under the freeway, she realizes that she can post mail into boxes that "you throw trash in" (*CL* 81). However, "On the swinging part were hand-painted the initials W.A.S.T.E." This is the mailbox that is used by the dispossessed members of the W.A.S.T.E network in San Francisco. Oedipa, too, uses that box to mail the old man's latter. This may be a step forward in her quest to know the truth about the Tristero. Having mailed the letter, she decides to lie in wait for anyone else who might use the WASTE mailbox. Around noon, a carrier shows up to take out "the letters." Oedipa starts to chase the, presumably, WASTE postman. After some time, he meets another carrier with whom he exchanges sacks. Oedipa pursues the first postman "all the way back down … to the trans-bay bus terminal," (82) where the carrier buys "a ticket for Oakland." She follows him for hours in a neighborhood unknown to her. Having finished his job, the postman takes a Berkeley bus, gets off at one point and leads Oedipa "down the street to a pseudo-Mexican apartment house" where John Nefastis lives. The narrator tells us that Oedipa "was back where she'd started, and could not believe 24 hours had passed."

The streets of California are shown to offer hints toward the realization of meaning regarding the Tristero. Nevertheless, those momentary revelations seem to be undermined by the fact that her walk under the highway and the chase of the WASTE postman lead to no redemption in the turbulent life of *Lot 49*'s protagonist. The novel's spatial dimension, in accordance with the historical context of the Sixties and their cultural spirit, offers a vision in which change toward a better America seems possible. At the same time, that optimistic view moves toward a liminal position as the freeway undercuts the possibility of any revelation in the end.

Gravity's Rainbow delineates another aspect of Pynchon's spatial vision regarding, amongst other places, California. The novel hints at the Sixties opposition and the hippie counterculture where California might be considered as a space capable of offering possibilities and the hope for a better America. However, Pynchon's novel shows also the beginning of the end of the Long Sixties counterculture. Regarding *Vineland*, N. Katherine Hayles has observed that in

this novel Pynchon asks the question "how profoundly the American revolution of the sixties failed" (77). Drawing on this observation, Luc Herman and Steven Weisenburger argue that, when writing *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon was "already posing that question in 1973" (61). This position can be emphasized by the presence of the Los Angeles Orpheus Theatre manager Richard M. Zhlubb, the adenoidal Nixon figure, cruising L.A. freeways. He believes, "No, one hesitates to say it, but the Santa Monica is a freeway for [hippie] freaks" (*GR* 776). In fact, he has a plan to get rid of them in Orange County. The representation of California freeways in the novel signals the waning of the countercultural energies. Furthermore, a rocket positioned right above the fictive L.A. Orpheus theater, in the final segment of the novel titled "Descent," subverts Los Angeles as a promising setting with future possibilities. As Stephen Hock has observed, "the freeway functions as an emblem of the possibilities that Pynchon locates in California" (202), for instance, "as a possible venue for community and connection" (201-202). At the same time, "the portrait of the freeway that Pynchon draws marks the freeway predominantly as a carrier of death and destruction in the service of modern capital and power" (201).

In a scene in *Vineland*, Zoyd Wheeler takes a flight from California to Hawaii, "in the turbulent last days of his marriage, out on one more desperate attempt … to save the relationship" (50) with his ex-wife Frenesi Gates. Soon after, however, when he decides to send flowers to her room, he realizes that she has left him once again, taking a flight back to California. After much dreaming about her, this time Zoyd decides to not follow and leave her with "her charismatic little federal boyfriend" (51): "Fuck her, he chirped to himself, today's your release date, let ol' Brock have her" (54). That night he "hits the street" and start to "bounce" from one bar to another in Honolulu, "allowing himself to trust to the hidden structures of night in a city, to a gift he sometimes thought he had for drifting." This sort of aimless bouncing from one place to another reminds us of Benny Profane's "shuttling on the subway back and forth" (*V* 15) in New York, like a "yo-yo," without achieving any meaning in life. Zoyd's drifting at night in Honolulu is, to some extent, also similar to Oedipa's nocturnal wandering in San Francisco en route to discovering the real nature of the Tristero. Considering these characters' "yo-yoing," metaphorically, the narrative of *Vineland* yo-yoes back and forth from the novel's present in 1984 to the 1960s America. In doing so, Reagan's policies are thematically connected with the Nixonian repression in dealing with the counterculture, which I will expound on later in this chapter.

With *Vineland*, it is as though, after a seventeen-year hiatus, the unanswered questions in his previous novels, not least of all *Lot 49*, had been resurrected. For example, a significant issue to which Pynchon most often goes back in his novels is the possibility of an alternative America and its meaning. In what follows, from his non-fiction writing, we can observe the importance of this issue to his mind. Apropos the novel *DeFord*, written by Pynchon's friend David Shetzline in 1968, he wrote that "This is an extraordinary book … For at its heart is an awareness that the America which should have been is not the America we ourselves live in; that the dissonances set up between the two grow wider and more tragic." Elsewhere, on John Speicher's 1967 *Looking for Baby Paradise*, he wrote that in his novel one can feel "most hopefully a refusal to believe that the world he's telling about really has to be like it is. For reasons Americans have only lately begun looking into, and in the best sense of the word, *Looking for Baby Paradise* is revolutionary." Here again, Pynchon shows his inclination toward an alternative America, other than what it presently is, and his hope that American people realize the need for a revolutionary attitude to have a better nation.

Although Pynchon revisits certain issues explored in previous novels, for the reasons we shall see, it does not mean that his second California novel is not different than his earlier fiction. Quite the contrary, *Vineland* is a turning point in Pynchon's career. This idea might have an important implication: the failure of the 1960s counterculture to achieve its socio-cultural goals in the American society, implicitly addressed in the previous novels, implies that Pynchon's writing in *Vineland* is, stylistically and thematically, modified. With that in mind, through an analysis of the political and cultural events in America's postwar history from the 1960s to the 1980s, I argue that *Vineland*'s spatial aspect interacts with the overall structure of the narrative in a way that it underscores the novel's critical significance in the trilogy, and Pynchon's fiction for that matter. Since the novel has a double temporal setting, in doing so, I deem it necessary to carefully focus on the historical aspect, regarding both the socio-political events of these two decades in California and Pynchon's life and career, alongside my spatial analysis.

2.2. Creating Vineland: Understanding the "postmetropolitan transition"

When the former hippie Zoyd Wheeler is forced to leave his house, because of a drug setup by the federal prosecutor Brock Vond, he seeks refuge from Brock's troubles in Vineland with her daughter Prairie and his friend, and Prairie's godfather, Van Meter. In the novel, Vineland Bay is

"'A Harbor of Refuge,' as the 1851 survey map called it, 'to Vessels that may have suffered on their way North from the strong headwinds that prevail along this coast from May to October'" (273). Van tells Zoyd that "'ere's worse places for a desperado to hide out. You understand, every guy up here looks just like we do. You're dern near invisible already" (274). It is exactly as if Vineland is "A Harbor of Refuge" for the Sixties hippies, such as Zoyd himself, who have lost all their power in the wake of the oppressive federal policies inasmuch as they have become almost invisible. Since that invisibility provides this group of isolated countercultural radicals with a certain level of freedom, Vineland is like the last refuge on earth for them as a place where they might be immune from state persecution.

When they enter Vineland, we learn that "the primary sea coast, forest, riverbanks and bay were still not much different from what early visitors in Spanish and Russian ships had seen." But even in such a suburban area, as Zoyd is driving, they come across a "federal building, jaggedly faceted, obsidian black, standing apart, inside a vast parking lot whose fences were topped with concertina wire" (273). For the benefit of Zoyd, who is surprised at the sight of the federal structure, Van explains that "'it just landed one night,'" "'sitting there in the morning when everybody woke up, folks seem to be gettin' used to it.'" This could have something to do with Pynchon's concern with the expansion of military-industrial bases in California suburbs throughout the Sixties. In the previous chapter, I argued how this idea can be purported through a comparison between San Narciso and any major Southern California town, such as those in Orange County. However, the issue at hand is the presence of a state building in the suburban Vineland which recalls the Republican policies that promoted the construction of military bases in California suburbia. Whether or not this military case is compelling, the novel offers another significant detail that reinforces the urban aspect of the construction. This part of the country, which is a refuge for the "desperados," low lives, and those isolated souls like Zoyd, seems to be monopolized by real estate outfits. These companies have recently discovered this suburban area, empty of inhabitants, and compete to own the land for future construction:

> the cable television companies showed up in the county, got into skirmishes that included exchanges of gunfire between gangs of rival cable riggers, eager to claim souls for their distant principals, fighting it out house by house, with the Board of Supervisors compelled eventually to partition the county into Cable Zones, which in time became political units in their own right as the Tubal entrepreneurs went extending their webs even where there

> weren't enough residents per linear mile to pay the rigging cost, they could make that up in town, and besides, they had faith in the future of California real estate. (275)

The arrival of "the cable television companies" and "the Tubal entrepreneurs," getting into conflicts violently, significantly changed the shape of Vineland landscape and the structure of the County, because "the Board of Supervisors" was "compelled eventually to partition the county into Cable Zones." These "Tubal entrepreneurs" extended their sphere of power and control on the land, even in places where there were no inhabitants, because their agenda consisted in developing future construction in California.

This is a reminder of "crisis-generated restructuring" through the "urbanization of suburbia" which started after WWII and continued, ever faster, during Nixon-Reagan-Bush administrations. As previously discussed, Orange County, to be sure, was the conservative headquarters for Republican policies in the 1960s. Through the expansion of Orange County, and similar places, the California landscape went through a process of suburban urbanization that served the political purposes of state control, on the one hand, and capitalist profits of the wealthy, on the other. In much the same way, in *Vineland*, the appropriation of Northern California open land, by private businesses, suggests a green light to construction activities of the entrepreneurs who are modifying the California landscape.

With Reagan's policies of small government, market deregulation, and huge tax cuts for the wealthy, such companies and rich entrepreneurs grew more powerful in practicing their economic plans with an increasingly disappearing middle-class America. As the narrator relates, "Developers in and out of state had also discovered this shoreline in the way of the wind, with its concealed tranquilities and false passages, this surprise fish-trap in the everyday coast. All born to be suburbs, in their opinion, and the sooner the better. It meant work, but too much of it nonunion and bought shamefully cheap." As can be seen, these private developers and "nonunion" companies started to take over Vineland shore and its landscape for their construction profits. Indeed Reagan, in his first inaugural address on January 20, 1981, declared that "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." His economic policies, known as Reaganomics, gave extraordinary leverage and liberty to the top rich. The criticism of such policies, that in fact changed the American landscape, is very much present in *Vineland*. The spatial development of the peripheral Vineland County in the novel, in my view, is a reflection of the policies of "the urbanization of suburbia," which allowed the wealthy minority

to follow their real estate construction programs. The suburban urbanization was meant to distribute the minority populations, so they can be controlled more easily, and also to make the promise of the American dream, including single-family houses, come true. Interestingly enough, the spatial modification of Vineland County, in the novel, takes place through a political struggle of power. By appropriating the landscape, the developers claim and achieve more political power and aim for real estate construction in this peripheral Northern California County in the future. As Bill Millard has argued "The systematic consumption of both rural and urban land reshaped much of the American landscape into a relatively undifferentiated type of residential space, one that erased the physical features of local history" (73). On that score, we can think of the spatial dimension of government power, resulting in the homogenization of California landscape, in terms of the striation of "smooth space" (Deleuze and Guattari 474) for socio-political purposes.[15]

The changing structure of the California landscape in Pynchon's fiction is by no means limited to the California trilogy. For reasons related to an important issue in the larger picture of *Vineland*'s narrative structure, I briefly touch upon a scene from *Gravity's Rainbow* that is the starting point of the introduction in Stefan Mattessich's *Lines of Flight*, an interesting work that investigates the Sixties counterculture in Pynchon's oeuvre. Mattessich observes that near the end of *Gravity's Rainbow* the narrator describes one of Slothrop's first encounters with Seaman Bodine. Bodine sings a song about "some nameless sailor stuck in wartime San Diego" (*GR* 759) who wishes to escape by going "back north, to Humboldt County." He argues that this detail in the novel resonates with a "historically later moment in American society: the counterculture's return to the land, to nature, and to a simpler and more communal way of life" (Mattessich 1), which Pynchon follows in *Vineland*. The sailor's desire to move from Southern California's San Diego to the Northern Humboldt County suggests the waning energies of the hippie counterculture which, 17 years later, will seek refuge in the redwoods of Vineland.

Nevertheless, my argument here is that the geographical movement from San Diego to Humboldt County sheds useful light on an important spatial issue, regarding the California

[15] In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari speak of "smooth space and striated space" (474). "Smooth space" is heterogeneous, dynamic, and open-ended whereas "striated space" is homogenized, fixed, and gridded. "State space," as opposed to "nomad space," falls under the category of "striated space." In this respect, as the authors argue, "One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space" (385).

urban/suburban space, that intersects with certain important social and political events in America's history. On the one hand, San Diego is a Southern California County, host to many important military-industrial bases, which has historically been a Republican conservative center. On the other, Humboldt County in Northern California, where Pynchon's Vineland is located, is nothing like San Diego County in terms of military-industrial complexes. Indeed, it is more characterized by agricultural areas and its natural forests and parks. Bearing this contrast in mind, the sailor's hope to move from an industrial major city to a rural, agricultural one punctuates what can be understood in terms of a center-periphery paradigm. In this respect, *Vineland* shows some level of similarity with *Lot 49* in terms of the urban form "postmetropolitan transition." At the same time, it indicates that something new is going on. While in *Lot 49* the main action of the plot takes place in urban cityscape of Los Angeles and the periphery is being woven into the urban center of the city through that grid of roads and construction, in *Vineland* it is in the rural, forested town of Vineland in Humboldt County that the plot, for the most part, unfolds. In other words, a comparison of these two novels, through Edward Soja's urban model, signals a new spatial direction in Pynchon's depiction of city structure. Whereas in both novels there is a center-periphery paradigm, in which the two parts are connected through the maze of the highways and real estate construction, from *Lot 49* to *Vineland*, the center of action changes from urban flatland to suburbia.

Vineland shows a continuity with *Lot 49* in terms of the "urbanization of suburbia." A case in point is the state urban policies, such as the cable television companies' development of the rural area, which follow the path of Pierce Inverarity's construction projects in California suburbia for the capitalist interests of the real estate tycoons. However, as I mentioned, there is also a difference in the urbanization pattern from one novel to the other. In *Vineland*, the hippie radicals seek shelter in the redwood forests of Northern California which depicts a movement toward a rural setting. As a watershed moment in Pynchon's career, *Vineland* already hints at this natural dimension that goes beyond Soja's urban form. This change in Pynchon's spatial thought can be justified by the interval between the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Vineland*, which reinforces the idea that *Vineland* is a turning point in Pynchon's career. The movement of certain groups of the population toward the California suburbia during Nixon-Reagan years was a state policy that served the purposes of private capital as well as government "command and control" (*IV* 213).

I would like to draw attention now to two noteworthy issues of the novel that in some way might underscore a somewhat different nature of suburban urbanization in *Vineland* than that represented in *Lot 49*. Pynchon's narrator recounts that when developers from different parts of America discovered the Vineland shoreline and its potential for construction business, they created work but "too much of it nonunion and bought shamefully cheap." The condition of workers and the treatment of corporations are of prime importance in California land development history. For instance, in 1988, when he was writing *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis observed that "less than one-third of private employers in California as a whole, and even less in Los Angeles County, pay the full cost of their workers' health insurance premiums" (XIII). Davis mentions that "The working poor in Los Angeles, in consequence, have only marginally better access to health care than they might possess in Mexico City or Rio de Janeiro." In effect, the only forces which remain significantly influential in local politics are "homeowners associations" (XV). In this condition, "suburban coalitions still wrangle with developers over the scale and pace of land conversion." Pynchon deftly uses the word "nonunion," in my opinion, to refer to Reagan's America and the fading trend of union jobs in view of his economic policies. In *Vineland*, there seems to be no possibility of a decent job for those like Zoyd. He is a former hippie who tries to get together his life. However, Reaganomics has subsumed all the possibilities and Zoyd ekes out a living on regular government mental disability checks for diving through a window, which he has to perform yearly as a proof of his mental condition.

In a scene, driving in Vineland, Zoyd and his friend Mucho Maas talk about the bygone red-letter days in the Sixties. Disappointed by the militarization of the land and the state apparatus controlling people strictly, they listen "to the sermon, one they knew and felt their hearts comforted by, though outside spread the lampless wastes, the unseen paybacks, the heartless power of the scabland garrison state the green free America of their childhoods even then was turning into" (271). The hopeful America that they knew when they were children, with many possibilities for the population, has now become "the scabland garrison state," under Reagan, that leaves out many like Zoyd and Mucho. They cannot have a proper job unless they did something like Frenesi and Flash, who are informers for the government. But even Frenesi is not "exempt" (80) from "the Reaganomic ax blades" and feels that she and her husband "might easily be abandoned." Indeed, most of the characters in the novel do jobs that are not much productive to society. Either they are part of the federal program in some way, which means working against their own people, or they

are left out by the government and there are not many possibilities for them. Indeed, the new economic policies consistently shrank the great union days in America's past and the labor struggle lost its power during the 1980s.

Another important issue in terms of how the spatial change in the California landscape relates to the narrative structure is the way the Tube affects the lives of people in the novel. Television is delineated as a powerful tool for controlling people. The Tubal companies are expanding their control over the suburban California landscape "which in time became political units" (*VL* 275). The appropriation and modification of open areas of land in rural Vineland is a powerful method for the "cable television companies" to achieve economic power, through real estate business, and political leverage in society. This seems to be a suggestion of how the Tube is taking command of peoples' attitudes toward politics and economy. This is also true of the bigger picture in the novel insofar as it is shown as an addictive tool of control. Many characters, and their lives, are depicted to be enormously drawn to and influenced by the Tube. Zoyd has to do his stunt work through the window on television for an annual paycheck. Frenesi enjoys "masturbating" to the Tube, "to the perennial motorcycle-cop favorite 'CHiPs'" (73), that is putting on images of police authority in "uniforms," which she is "crazy" about. Hector Zuñiga, a DEA agent, is a Tube addict who is trying to create a project for a movie telling the story of the Sixties events, with Frenesi as its director to make her come out of hiding.

Isaiah Two Four tells Zoyd, "Minute the Tube got hold of you folks that was it, that whole alternative America, el deado meato, just like the' Indians, sold it all to your real enemies" (322). Isaiah refers to the power of television to distract, manipulate, control, and subject people for political purposes, as it was with the Sixties revolution of Zoyd and Frenesi's generation. It is peculiarly paradoxical, and a parody, that the government pursues its war on drugs by incarcerating young people while, indeed, the most dangerous drug of all is the Tube itself. As Joseph Slade points out, "the real narcotic in *Vineland* is television" (71). Emphasizing the effects of mediated information, he argues how television as "an instrument for change becomes an instrument of the status quo" (70). In this respect, the narrator tells us that according to the *Bardo Thödol*, "the soul newly in transition often doesn't like to admit … that it's really dead" (*VL* 190). In its turbulent mental status, "an enhancing factor" is television which, like drugs, provides soothing effects. The spatial critical analysis here suggests that in *Vineland* suburban land development by television

companies go hand in hand with the political and economic mechanisms of power and control, maintaining the status quo.

2.3. From *Vineland's* College of the Surf and Trasero County to California's Orange and San Diego Counties: A Geocritical Analysis

Vineland's chapter ten ends with an episode in which 24fps members are trapped in the College of the Surf in Trasero County during a countercultural confrontation with state forces in the 1960s. 24fps is a militant film collective that documents the oppressive actions of government agents against the hippie radicals. The narrator relates that in the wake of the events at the College, the 24fps

> found themselves all the way up Shit's Creek, with all lines of withdrawal from the campus denied them. By the time of the last offer by bullhorn of safe passage, every road, watercourse, storm drain, and bike path was interdicted. All phones were cut off, and the news media, compliant as always, at a harmless, unbridgeable distance. On that last night, 24fps had exclusive coverage of the story, if anybody survived to bring it out. (178)

The 24fps's informal slogan is "Che Guevara's phrase 'Wherever death may surprise us.'" Young and radical, they are "sometimes infuriatingly careless" and are not afraid of learning "with their bodies the language of batons, high-pressure hoses, and CZ gas." When the College comes under attack and is besieged by federal forces under Brock's direction, they are present for shooting the events taking place there. One of the shocking incidents is the death of Weed Atman, a mathematics professor who becomes the leader of the protests. This reminds us of the student protests in the Sixties such as the event known as Bloody Thursday when Reagan was California governor. On May 15, 1969, a peaceful afternoon rally against the University of California's seizure of People's Park turned into a violent confrontation between police and student demonstrators. Reagan had been a longtime critic of university administrators in dealing with student demonstrations at the Berkeley campus. In 1966, he promised to "clean up the mess at Berkeley," which was the hippies and leftists' stronghold.[16] On Bloody Thursday, Reagan sent California Highway Patrol and Berkeley police officers into People's Park to suppress the

[16] See bibliography, page 134.

rally. As the protesters arrived, they were met by police forces and the rally turned into a riot. A student, named James Rector, was killed by police. Reagan sustained that Rector might have been shot by police but criticized that "it's very naive to assume that you should send anyone into that kind of conflict with a flyswatter." As we know historically, Nixon too used such repressive methods of control in handling the countercultural protests. He too had depicted himself to the American public, in the 1968 Presidential election, as the candidate of "law and order" to save America's "silent majority." When he won the Republican nomination, he promised "action" in order to restore peace in the nation. These important historical and political issues are alluded to in Pynchon's novel.

The beginning of *Vineland*'s eleventh section describes the shape of the "legendary Trasero County" where the College is located. Perhaps, in no other part of the novel are we dealing more directly with cartography than here:

> THE shape of the brief but legendary Trasero County coast … repeated on its own scale the greater curve between San Diego and Terminal Island, including a military reservation which, like Camp Pendleton in the world at large, extended from the ocean up into a desert hinterland. At one edge of the base, pressed between the fenceline and the sea, shimmered the pale archways and columns, the madrone and wind-shaped cypresses of the clifftop campus of College of the Surf. (178-179)

There's a sharp contrast of ideology between this huge conservative military base and the countercultural ideals of the College radicals. The mention of Camp Pendleton, one of the largest Marine Corps bases in the U.S. built in 1942, and San Diego County is a reminder of many aerospace and military establishments built or activated in the 1960s in the arms race with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. These policies in Southern California led to the militarization of the land, affecting the lives of the American people. Both Trasero County and the College of the Surf are fictional places in the novel. The narrator recounts that the College is "bracketed by the two ultraconservative counties of Orange and San Diego, having like a border town grown into an extreme combination of both" (179). Trasero County is a sort of borderline between Orange and San Diego Counties where we learn about the wealthy Republicans with "solid Southern California money, oil, construction, pictures." The College, a conservative Republican school, is located at the edge of a cliff between the Ocean and a large military base.

San Diego is the headquarters of the U.S. Navy for West Coast and Pacific Ocean operations. Historically, it has been a Republican stronghold from 1948 through 2004, with the exception of the Presidential election in 1992. Orange County, as well, has been a stronghold of Republican conservatism. From a geocritical standpoint, the College does not represent any actual place, because there are no colleges near this border. Pynchon Wiki suggests that it might refer to Whittier College far northeast, and away from the coast, which is Richard Nixon's alma mater. This claim seems possible insofar as the narrator, describing Trasero County, tells us that those wealthy Southern California tycoons "flew in and out of private airfields" who "would soon be dropping in on Dick Nixon, just over the county line in San Clemente, without even phoning first." We are told that "the new Nixon Monument" was built "a hundred-foot colossus in black and white marble at the edge of the cliff, gazing not out to sea but inland, towering above the campus architecture, and above the highest treetops, dark-and pale, a quizzical look on its face" (180). The rich Southern California moguls, who supported and were guardians of the College, saw Nixon as the ideal president to expand their power and control throughout the rest of the country, for whom they might have built the statue. Pynchon describes it as "towering above the campus architecture, and above the highest treetops" which indicates how Nixon's policies controlled, surveilled, and hovered over the youth countercultural movements. On June 13, 1970, he established the President's Commission on Campus unrest, which came to be known as the Scranton Commission. The purpose of the Commission was to study the dissent, law breaking, and violence on university campuses, not least the national student strike that was taking place in the aftermath of Kent State shootings. On May 4, 1970, during a campus demonstration at Kent State University against the Vietnam War, four students were shot by Ohio National Guard. In September 1970, the Commission concluded that the killing of the students were unjustified.

All these hints, in the novel, at the militarization of Southern California landscape during the 1960s, together with the rise of the New Right ideology supported by wealthy Republican tycoons, emphasize Nixon's paranoiac and repressive treatment of the youth counterculture. Deborah Cowen has observed that exurban and "rural areas have become the heartland of militarism and 'authentic' patriotism" in Western nations, appealing to conservative fractions of their populations. Applying the Southern Strategy in 1968, then candidate Nixon developed such strategies that successfully contributed to the political realignment of many conservative voters in the South to gain their support. In places such as Orange and San Diego Counties many military

headquarters, in suburban Southern California, were built during the Sixties. At the same time, the process of the "urbanization of suburbia," already set in motion in the 1950s, continued to profit real estate businessmen and construction entrepreneurs, which later reached its pinnacle under Reagan's economic policies.

2.3.1. The Implications of the Geocritical Analogy in Understanding the Space of Politics in *Vineland*

> *We're on into a new world now, it's the Nixon Years, then it'll be the Reagan Years —*
>
> Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland*

As regards the conservative Republicans who endowed the College, Pynchon's narrator relates that "Ostensibly College of the Surf was to have been their own private polytechnic" (*VL* 179) for educating professional people at their disposal "in law enforcement, business administration, the brand-new field of Computer Science." In fact, Nixon himself was supported by the California business conservatives early in his political career in winning against the five-term Democratic Congressman Jerry Voorhis in 1946 and, more importantly, the Democratic candidate Helen Douglas in the race for the United States Senate in 1949. In *Vineland*, the wealthy protégés of the College accept only students compliant with their rules, "enforcing a haircut and dress code that Nixon himself confessed to finding a little stodgy." Nevertheless, "Against the somber military blankness" at the back of the College, we observe a completely different atmosphere:

> here was a lively beachhead of drugs, sex, and rock and roll, the strains of subversive music day and night, accompanied by tambourines and harmonicas, reaching like fog through the fence, up the dry gulches and past the sentinel antennas, the white dishes and masts, the steel equipment sheds, finding the ears of sentries attentuated but ominous, like hostile-native sounds in a movie about white men fighting savage tribes. (179)

In depicting the story of the College of the Surf, Pynchon touches upon prominent issues in America's history and politics during the 1960s. We can notice traces of the generational gap between the Sixties youth and their parents, the development of the counterculture, and the repression that was initiated against the youth movements, esp. after Nixon's election as President.

We learn that the Southern California moguls supported the college financially "for training the sorts of people who would work for them" to expand their power and exercise their ideals in the future throughout the country. They admitted "only students likely to be docile," who would later become successors to their agenda and promote their economic and political plans. However, it is in this conservative atmosphere of restricted rules of social behavior and cultural docility that "the same dread disease infecting campuses across the land" reaches the campus of the College. Although an infectious disease for the patrons of the College, it offers a new opportunity to the submissive students who now enjoy "a lively beachhead of drugs, sex, and rock and roll, the strains of subversive music." The new trend, initiated by the consumption of a strong type of marijuana, becomes an epidemic on the campuses of American universities including the College of the Surf. This could be read as part of the generational conflict between the value system of these hippie college students and that of their financial supporters. This contrast of values was magnified in the form of an opposition that took shape as the counterculture. Smoking marijuana and taking LSD was a way to free oneself from the restricting system put in place by the older generation. For the countercultural youth, the use of drugs was a way to set themselves free from the conditioning received by their families and the conformist U.S. society of the 1950s, who considered the hippies' behavior irresponsible. To the youth, on the contrary, it was a method through which they could protest against the traditional system and its restraining conventions.

As the new trend of opposition becomes more significant in the College, during a campus protest, the authorities intervene with violence. "It was a moment of light, in which the true nature of police was being revealed to" (181) everyone, including Weed Atman. The movement "flourished, as week after week amazingly went by, a small crescent-shaped region of good spirits in that darkening era, cheerful not in desperation or even defiance, but in simple relief from what had gone before, still innocent of how it could ever be stopped" (182). At first, the official forces do not take the movement seriously because, if they wanted, it could have been "squashed in a matter of hours by the invisible forces up on the base." However, "it was still too uncomfortably close to San Clemente," where Nixon lived, "and other sensitive locales." In the following days, "It came to light that College of the Surf was no institution of learning at all but had been an elaborate land developers' deal from the beginning, only disguised as a gift to the people." As a result, on behalf of the people, the students decide to take back the College and, "knowing the state was in on the scheme at all levels" (183), they go on to "become a nation of their own" independent

of California. Consequently, the College of the Surf becomes a free nation named "The People's Republic of Rock and Roll."

This incident mirrors the events that initiated the shaping of the countercultural movements. Scared and startled at the sight of three policemen, "falling upon one unarmed student" and "beating him with their riot sticks," Weed wonders why "'They're breaking people's heads?'" This is an expression of how American youth were becoming increasingly suspicious of their government and its policies. To offer an example of young American's diminishing faith in their state, Pynchon provides us with an intriguing episode on the Vietnam War. A graduate student in the Southeast Asian Studies Department, Rex Snuvvle is "being indoctrinated into the government's version of the war in Vietnam" (181). However, "despite his own best efforts," he had "been at last as unable to avoid the truth as, once knowing it, to speak it, out of what he easily admitted was fear of reprisal." Having reached a new understanding of the war, he envisions "himself counseling and educating Weed Atman, a dialogue in which together they might explore American realities in the light of this low-hanging Eastern lamp" (182). Although "Weed, much to his dismay, turned out to be all but silent," Rex's realization of a different account of the war punctuates the difficulties that U.S. administrations were going through during the 1960s, in dealing with people's rising understanding of, and dissatisfaction with, the war in Vietnam. The killing of Weed, the leader of the PR^3 nation, is planned by Brock himself in which Rex and Frenesi both are used as tools to that end. Here, we are reminded of John F. Kennedy who was assassinated early in his Presidency. Later in the decade, other important leaders such Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated as well, planting further distrust in the hearts and minds of American people regarding the politics of their nation. Pynchon calls "murder as an instrument of American politics" (*VL* 34). Elsewhere in the novel, we learn that "Since the end of the war in Vietnam, the Thanatoid population had been growing steeply" (276), which suggests that many people experienced the somber feeling of war and those who died in it. With Weed's murder, PR^3 begins to fall apart.

The day after PR^3's declaration of independence, the 24fps comes in to report the recent issues. They notice subversive energy everywhere on the campus as the new anti-establishment movement is taking shape. "Through the crude old color and distorted sound" of the film shot by Frenesi back in the 1960s, which Zoyd and Takeshi are showing to Prairie in the novel's present, Prairie "could feel the liberation in the place that night, the faith that anything was possible, that

nothing could stand in the way of such joyous certainty" (183). However, "No hour day or night was exempt from helicopter visits, though this was still back in the infancy of overhead surveillance." This is a reflection of Nixon's paranoiac and severe policies of control and his war on drugs, whose representative in the novel is the federal prosecutor Brock Vond. The narrator tells us that at this stage of events "Some wanted to declare war on the Nixon Regime, others to approach it … on the topic of revenue sharing." Explaining to Frenesi, who has flown to Oklahoma to visit him, Brock tells her that "he had drafted, sent up, and was about to have authorized a plan to destabilize and subvert PR^3 with funding from one of the DOJ discretionary lines. 'It's a laboratory setup,' Brock argued, 'a Marxist ministate, product of mass uprising, we don't want it there'" (185-186). Therefore, he organizes an attack on PR^3 with "shots of helicopters descending" (216) and "a ratlike swarm of approaching troops in camouflage and blackface." Consequently, "By morning there were scores of injuries, hundreds of arrests, no reported deaths but a handful of persons unaccounted for." Interestingly enough, "In those days it was still unthinkable that any North American agency would kill its own civilians and then lie about it." This is a reminder of those incidents in the 1960s such as Bloody Thursday at People's Park.

Later in the novel, referring to the clash between federal forces and members of the PR^3, at a news conference, Vond calls it "humorously as 'rapture'" (216). When the media ask him "where, in his opinion, if it was OK to ask, Mr. Vond, sir, the missing students might have gotten to," he answers "Why, underground, of course. That's our assumption." At this point "Somebody from the radical press," who "must have infiltrated," asks, "'You mean they're on the run? Are there warrants out? How come none are listed as federal fugitives?'" However, "The reporter was led away by a brace of plainclothes heavies as Brock Vond genially repeated … 'Underground, hm? Rapture below. Yes, the gentleman in the suit and tie?'" Brock asks the security to take away the journalist who wants to know what happened to the students when faced with his vague answer: "Underground." Along with other cues in the novel, this scene suggests Nixon's own resentment toward the media and his struggle in dealing with them and curbing their power. As recounted by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in *The Washington Post*, in February 1971, Nixon told Admiral Thomas H. Moorer that "The press is your enemy. Enemies. Understand that? … Because they're trying to stick the knife right in our groin."[17]

[17] See bibliography, page 140.

Next, we learn that before the conference had begun a "small convoy of field-gray trucks, locked shut, unmarked … had left out the back way without even pausing for the security at the checkpoint." According to the reports some people had "seen Frenesi taken off in the convoy" (217). Some of them "had tried to follow, only to come each time to a peculiar network of transition roads where … they were unable to gain access." Passing through "a complex array of ramps, transition lanes, and suspiciously tidy country roads, the trucks eventually pulled up onto the little-known and only confidentially traveled FEER, or Federal Emergency Evacuation Route" (216-217). The destination of the convoy is a "secluded valley that had been the site of an old Air Force fog-dispersal experiment and later, … in the quotidian horrors of Vietnam, intended as a holding area able to house up to half a million urban evacuees in the event of, well, say, some urban evacuation" (217). As suggested in the previous chapter, this is a reference to Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System that was supposed to help American citizens in case of a communist attack. However, the FEER freeway, "a dim tunnel that went for hundreds of miles," "beneath camouflage netting and weatherproof plastic sheet," was "conceived in the early Sixties as a disposable freeway that would only be used, to full capacity, once." The suggestion, here, is that the construction of highways, such as FEER, might have had political goals, besides presumably providing a refuge in case of a Soviet attack. The people who had tried to follow the Convoy had heard that the FEER freeway is defective in some parts of its camouflage. Even though "Maps were available up and down the street," few agreed and no one knew specifically "what was inside the ragged polygon at the end of the classified freeway, labeled only 'National Security Reservation.'" This reinforces the idea that, rather than being used for urban evacuation, this federal shady highway is used for the state's political and military purposes.

DL and other group members believe that "Frenesi could not have gone willingly" (218) with the convoy and had been kidnapped by Brock. This made them feel "their nightmares about the Nixon regime coming true." As DL, Howie, and Sledge intrude into the secret FEER freeway to save Frenesi, they observe the pictures of American martyrs in their fight against communism at the base of the poles on the freeway. They discover that "each of these folks' images had been given eyes designed to follow whoever was driving past, so the Nomad's progress was observed" (219). In fact, later in the novel, DL tells Prairie that "Nixon had machinery for mass detention all in place and set to go. Reagan's got it for when he invades Nicaragua" (230). Heading for the road

to escape from Vond, Ditzah wonders why he would come after them: “Is he trying to roll back time? What is it that's so hard for him to live with?” She herself guesses that

> Then again, it's the whole Reagan program, isn't it — dismantle the New Deal, reverse the effects of World War II, restore fascism at home and around the world, flee into the past, can't you feel it, all the dangerous childish stupidity — 'I don't like the way it came out, I want it to be my way.' If the President can act like that, why not Brock?

Reagan’s policies are shown to be retrograde and repressive. An illustration of such oppressive policies is the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984: “Under terms of a new Comprehensive Forfeiture Act that Reagan was about to sign into law any minute now, the government had filed an action in civil court against Zoyd's house and land” (307). This overreaching Act was put into practice under Reagan’s administration, as part of the war on drugs. One of its important provisions was asset forfeiture, meaning to seize any property that was involved in criminal activity. During Nixon’s Presidency, Brock had set Zoyd up and charged him with hiding cannabis in his house in order to confiscate it. But he really wanted Zoyd to go somewhere else with Prairie and disappear from Frenesi’s life. Under the new Reaganite Act in the novel’s present, Vond’s marshals keep watching Zoyd’s house after his troops have been “terrorizing the neighborhood for weeks, running up and down the dirt lanes in formation chanting ‘War-on-drugs! War-on-drugs!’ strip-searching folks in public, killing dogs, rabbits, cats, and chickens, pouring herbicide down wells that couldn't remotely be used to irrigate dope crops” (308). As Ditzah tells DL, “If the President can act like that, why not Brock?” (230). This makes Zoyd very much scared because his house could be seized and easily become government property. He begins to “have terrifying dreams in which he would come around a curve in the road and find the place in flames, too late to save, the smell of more than wood destroyed and sent forever to ash.” Elmhurst, Zoyd’s lawyer who specializes “in abuses of power” (310), says, “‘The law's brand-new, the intentions behind it are as old as power.’” He is referring to the “civil RICO weapon” (309), signed into law by Nixon in 1970, figuring that it “would be the prosecutorial wave of the future” under Reagan. According to the new law, Zoyd is considered guilty unless proven innocent. When he asks his lawyer, “‘What about 'innocent till proven guilty'?’” (310), he answers, “‘That was another planet, think they used to call it America, long time ago, before the gutting of the Fourth Amendment. You were automatically guilty the minute they found that marijuana growing on your land.’” This is a

reflection on the changing structure of the political system in the American society. So different was the Sixties America that it is described as "another planet" in the 1980s.

"They used to call it America." Through Elmhurst's opinion, Pynchon seems to be asking what America is, or has become. In *Vineland*, Zoyd's ex-hippie friend Van Meter is "a lifetime searcher for meaning" (11), and so are many other characters in Pynchon's novels. The lives of Benny Profane, Oedipa Maas, Charles Mason, Maxine Tarnow, and a long list of other characters, are characterized by doubts and questions about the meaning of America in the overall narrative structure. One day, Prairie asks her father if he ever worried that he might not be her father, "'That maybe it was Weed, or Brock?'" (324). Such is the oppression of the new system of control that Zoyd replies, "'Nope. What I was more afraid of was, 's 'at I might belong to Brock.'" Brock's actions and Reagan's policies are shown to be so intrusive, through the new legislation, that Zoyd is always surveilled, so much so that he feels not even in control of his life. That Zoyd feels powerless about his own life resonates with the fact that many of his generation were used as political tools by the state. As the narc Hector tells him, "just sometime, please, aks yourself, OK, 'Who was saved?'" (27). By the end of their meeting, Hector fumes off, asserting to him "Death! after all them yearss of nonconformist shit, you're gonna end up just like everybody else anyway! ¡ Ja, ja! So what was it for? All 'at livín in the hippie dirt, drivín around some piece of garbage ain't even in the blue book no more." (30). The hippie counterculture is just a memory now. Frenesi is the most prominent example in the novel of someone who was used by Brock as an instrument in the 1960s to realize his political goals, such as murdering Weed and overthrowing PR[3].

It has been suggested that Pynchon's "political sympathies are leftist and pro-labor" (Hume 167). For example, in a letter from New York to his friends the Shetzlines in the winter of 1974, the year that he won the National Book Award for *Gravity's Rainbow*, he mentioned that "At the Village Gate, there was to be an 'Impeachment Rally' against Nixon" (Kachka). Pynchon asked, "Why didn't they have one in '68?" It has also been argued that "Pynchon's novels and other short stories revolve in planetary orbits around the sunlike moral intensity of the 1960s" (Cowart, *Dark Passages* 85). Generally speaking, *Lot 49* represents the zeitgeist of the 1960s and the countercultural energies before they were subsumed and controlled by the dominant system of official order. Indeed, the ending of the novel leaves open the possibility of redemption and hope for an alternative America. In *Vineland*, a middle-aged author contemplates the waning of the counterculture and looks back nostalgically at the decade that shaped his younger life. Cowart

observes that, in American history, the Sixties is "a crossroads" for Pynchon where "a vestigial innocence vies again with every dark propensity in the human heart." If the ending of *Lot 49* leaves this issue pending, in *Vineland* "the struggle between American innocence and the temptation to 'go over' or 'sell out' (to capitulate, that is, to a statist imperative) survives largely as a memory made bitter by the political tenor of the Reagan era" (135).

SECTION 2

2.4. Fictional and Mythical Spaces of Thanatoids and *Woge*: Looking for an Alternative Reality through Thirdspace

> *nobody in power gives a shit about any human life but their own. This forces us to be humane — to attack what matters more than life to the regime and those it serves, their money and their property.*
>
> Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland*

In chapter four of *Vineland*, Pynchon introduces the characters Vato and Blood. They work in a Vineland auto-shop, V & B Tow, where they offer tow service. Interestingly, they "tow away vehicles associated with Thanatoids" (162). However, there is no mention of them until they reappear in section nine. We see them again, in the last part of the novel, where they take Brock into the ancient underworld of the Yurok, who are the aboriginal inhabitants of Northern California. In chapter nine, Vato and Blood receive an emergency tow call from Shade Creek, where the Thanatoids live. Takeshi explains to DL that the Thanatoids are "victims … of karmic imbalances … with Shade Creek a psychic jumping-off town — behind it, unrolling, regions unmapped, dwelt in by these transient souls in constant turnover, not living but persisting" (151). The Thanatoids live in this mysterious California town near Vineland "while waiting for the data necessary to pursue their needs and aims among the still-living" (149). On their way to help a Thanatoid vehicle, that "had gone off the edge of a hillside road and was now in the top of an apple tree in the orchard just below" (162), Vato and Blood come across River Drive. Once past Vineland, "the river took back its older form, became what for the Yuroks it had always been, a river of ghosts" (163). Here, once, "Everything had a name," the mountains, the trees, the rocks and everything else "each with its own spirit." The Yurok people called these existences "*woge,*

creatures like humans but smaller, who had been living here when the first humans came." With the arrival of humans in their habitat, they started to withdraw:

> Some went away physically, forever, eastward, over the mountains, or nestled all together in giant redwood boats, singing unison chants of dispossession and exile, fading as they were taken further out to sea, desolate even to the ears of the newcomers, lost. Other *woge* who found it impossible to leave withdrew instead into the features of the landscape, remaining conscious, remembering better times, capable of sorrow and as seasons went on other emotions as well, as the generations of Yuroks sat on them, fished from them, rested in their shade, as they learned to love and grow deeper into the nuances of wind and light as well as the earthquakes and eclipses and the massive winter storms that roared in, one after another, from the Gulf of Alaska. (163)

The narrator relates that "For the Yuroks, who had always held this river exceptional, to follow it up from the ocean was also to journey through the realm behind the immediate," which is the realm of the *woge*. Indicating a different type of existence, this is the world of the "desolate" and "lost" *woge* who have developed an alternative way of life after being forced to "exile." This realm holds a liminal position where its inhabitants, like the Thanatoids, persist in their existence to live on but are forced to stay back. "Remaining conscious," they are always nostalgic of their original homeland taken over by the humans. Vato and Blood are told that "this coast, this watershed, was sacred and magical" and, "remembering better times," its banished inhabitants would, one day, return. This desire for a better life with original possibilities is mirrored in the Sixties revolution of Zoyd's generation in the hope of an alternative America. Nonetheless, the hippie radicals of the 1960s hold a similar position to the *woge* insofar as both are forced to a sort of "dispossession and exile." Zoyd, Van Meter, Mucho, and other Sixties revolutionaries find themselves in a condition of political and cultural inability due to the oppressive dynamics of state containment and control in the 1980s America. This group of abandoned Sixties countercultural youth is forced to a marginal position in society in a suburban Northern California city called Vineland. Like the *woge*, who "learned to love and grow," they are nostalgic about and crave to retrieve the past.

Of course, this has something to do with Pynchon's own experience of the decade and the fact that with Nixon in office the countercultural possibilities started to fade. The Nixonian repression and his war on drugs, in a continuity with the novel's present, are represented through

Reagan's militant policies. Under "Raygun" (270), as Zoyd pronounces it, the lives of DL, Frenesi, Flash, and the radical youth of their generation have almost become a bardo. Insofar as they are always harassed by the state and forced to a peripheral position under surveillance, one could say that these characters have somehow become Thanatoids themselves; "some of whom would discover that they were already Thanatoids without knowing it" (315).

Geocritically, the periphery-center paradigm is interesting because, as in *Lot 49*, the possibility of an alternative reality seems to be intimated in this suburban California landscape. In Brian Jarvis' words, "Pynchon's fictions gravitate towards … the spaces occupied by the underclass and the disinherited and towards the omniscience of forms of waste" (53). As I argued, in Pynchon's first California novel, by withdrawing from the life of the American society and operating from a peripheral position, the novel suggests an alternative way of life for the members of the WASTE system. Albeit precarious, this sort of geographical resistance is a stepping stone for the "disinherited," also in *Vineland*, to mobilize an alternative reality through which to resist Brock's oppression, which "embodies totalitarian stereotypes that gain luster from the Orwellian 1984 setting" (Hume 169). Pynchon's imaginary cartography provides the repressed Sixties anarchists with a chance of resistance from a marginal position that, however, does not readily lend itself to the state hegemonic narrative of order. As Samuel Thomas has argued, Pynchon's creation of these fragmented and local enclaves, away from the grasp of state oppression, can be described as a politics of "fugitive space" (128). The followers of the Tristero, the *woge*, the Thanatoids, and this group of the Sixties hippies are left to isolation and, "in their exile" (*CL* 100), try to resist the repressive hegemony of the status quo. For example, Weed Atman explains to Prairie that in his "after-death state" (*VL* 315) he is looking for "a new body to be born into," through which "his dispossessed soul might reenter the world." In resisting descent "into the earth, toward Tsorrek, the world of the dead" (163), he travels through the California landscape to find a "karmic adjuster working out of Shade Creek, who actually gets results" (165).

When Vato and Blood pass Vineland and reach the California suburban town of Shade Creek, they realize that its "insomniac population" (151) are evanescent souls called Thanatoids. This is also where the dispossessed *woge* reside in the changing features of the landscape. As Vato and Blood, who are "city guys" (163), drive from Vineland outside to Shade Creek, there is a geographical center-periphery contrast. Pynchon uses this spatial aspect of the narrative in order to underscore the marginal position of the *woge* who are forced by the humans to leave their land.

This power contrast, intimated by the Vineland landscape, instantiates, in turn, the politico-cultural conflict between the Sixties revolutionary youth and their repressive government during that decade which, under Reagan, is subsumed by Brock's surveillance and militarization of the land. Through this imaginary cartography, Pynchon shows the problem of Zoyd's generation as well as their, "skimpiest" (151) hope of, resistance that can be considered as an alternative possibility in the novel. If in *Lot 49*, I had to explain at some length how the withdrawal of the WASTE members could be an alternative reality, in *Vineland* there is more reason to hesitate about considering such a possibility. In Pynchon's fourth novel, the subversive energies suggested in *Lot 49* are curtailed and subdued. Nevertheless, there are cues in *Vineland* that do not completely leave out the possibility of some kind of redemption.

The creation of imaginary Vineland mobilizes a counter-hegemonic mapping that, albeit frail, gives the peripheral characters the chance of an alternative mode of being in the midst of state repression. When Vato and Blood learn about the history of the *woge*, the "Hippies they talked to said it could be reincarnation." The *woge* left their world to the humans and went on to live beneath the ocean as "porpoises" (163) and one day "would come back, teach us how to live the right way, save us" (164). Here, there seems to be to a religious suggestion in reincarnation and "saving" the humans. This redemption in the lives of DL, Zoyd and other Sixties hippies is suggested through the creation of a fictional California landscape. Pynchon seems to be suggesting that if there could be a redemptive solution in the lives of the "disinherited" *woge*, an alternative reality might be possible for this group of the Sixties radicals. As the *woge* are nostalgic about their appropriated habitat, so are these hippies about a past decade with possibilities in America. The spatial analysis of this suburban town keeps alive the hope for an alternative reality amidst the oppression of America in the 1980s.

Looking back at the worlds of the mythical creatures Thanatoids and the *woge*, an intriguing aspect is that they hold a liminal position. As an inhabitant of everyday world and that of the Thanatoids, Weed is the character that opens up a window into an alternative possibility in the novel. Before his murder, at the end of his workdays Weed "would go back down the chipped and crumbling steps, back across a borderline, invisible but felt at its crossing, between worlds. It was the only way to say it" (199). As a Thanatoid he is "reduced to hanging around monitoring the situation," hoping to find a way back to the world. In order to explain "Thirdspace," Bertrand Westphal uses the concept of "the entre-deux" (69). "The in-between" explores a space that is

neither the "Firstspace" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 10) nor the "Second" "and also perhaps already, both one and the other at the same time" (Serres 24). Westphal observes that "The in-between is a deterritorialization in action, but one that loiters, awaiting the moment of its reterritorialization" (69). This, pretty much, explains the *woge's* situation, and that of the Thanatoid Weed Atman, inasmuch as they are expelled from their world and are waiting for the right moment to return. Their withdrawal from life in America and their attempt to arrange a new way of being necessitates "an-Other" (*Thirdspace* 10) alternative in the lives of these dispossessed characters. This "Other" possibility is a significant trope in Pynchon's novels that he frequently revisits.

Chapter six of the novel starts with a description of Frenesi's life with her current husband Flash and their son Justin in their apartment. In a reflection on her life in the Sixties, the narrator recounts that "for Frenesi the past was on her case forever, the zombie at her back, the enemy no one wanted to see, a mouth wide and dark as the grave" (*VL* 64). It is exactly the past that has made her present "a world of simplicity." With Nixon as U.S. President, the hippie counterculture was approaching the end of its days. In *Vineland*, Pynchon delineates how the burgeoning possibilities for "diversity" (*CL* 114), for the Sixties "revolutionary anarchists" (*VL* 64) in America, have been turned into "certainty" under Reagan. There is only "a world based on the one and zero." It is a "minimal" world with "The patterns of lives and deaths." Once again, we are back to the extremely ordered and prefabricated world of "ones and zeroes" (*CL* 114), which we observe in almost all of Pynchon's novels. Elsewhere, in *Against the Day*, for example, he emphasizes the need for conceiving of a third alternative in understanding and organizing the world by depicting a binary conflict between the subversive energies of anarchy, irrationality, and multiplicity and the totalizing forces of control, capitalism and universality. In the "clash between forces of totalization and counterforces championing openness and improvisation" (Elias 130), a third possibility is required and Pynchon's novel showers us with alternative realities. In *Vineland*, the clash is between the memory of the Sixties counterculture and its radical possibilities and the oppressive order of control and surveillance in the militarized Eighties America that has left no space to imagination. In these novels, Pynchon suggests that any hegemonic metanarrative, such as colonialism in *Mason & Dixon*, capitalism in *Against the Day*, or repressive state ideology in *Vineland*, leaves out other possible ways of understanding and organizing the world. By opposing to them alternative realities, Pynchon draws attention to other possibilities, different than the

established ways of arranging the world at large, that can counter the hegemony of these calcified systems of power.

In purporting a new consciousness, "Thirdspace" proposes the possibility of an ontological plurality, in the sense of the coexistence of new alternatives, choices, and "worlds" (McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* 41), by resisting old ways of interpreting the world and its spatiality. The world of the *woge* represents a "space of resistance" (Westphal 85) and might well become a Thirdspace insofar as it resists an imposed condition and struggles to establish a new way of living. Another significant factor in their act of resistance is that it is done from a marginal position. Weed and the Sixties hippies, who have somehow become Thanatoids, hold a peripheral position in the novel and are compelled to live in a suburban area in Northern California. It is precisely in "the frontiers of suburban development" (McClintock and Miller 4) that the marginalized communities of society struggle for "independence" from the dominating order of power and control in America. Their withdrawal to the periphery, where they try to resist the oppression of the state, can be considered as an alternative reality that is "transgressive" (Westphal 37), despite established norms of the dominant order in Reagan's America, and challenges totalization.

In an article, entitled "Still Crazy After All These Years," Salman Rushdie has observed that in *Vineland* there is some "hint of redemption" because "community, it is suggested," might be a "counterweight to power." It is precisely this dynamic of community and collectivity that provides the possibility of a counter-hegemonic discourse as an alternative reality in the novel. Soja's concept of "thirding-as-Othering" proposes a "radically open perspective" (*Thirdspace* 5) that embraces different choices in interpreting the world and challenging its fixed social and political ruling mechanisms. In this critical category, the keyword is "Othering" which is meant to include infinite alternatives with the same degree of importance. In Pynchon's novel, such values as "community" and "family" suggest a collective consciousness that provides the "disinherited" and "dispossessed" with "an-Other" reality. This new reality helps them survive and resist in a world that is strongly ordered by a repressive system of policing, which leaves out all alternative ways of organizing the society except the official narrative of the state.

2.5. *Vineland*'s Ending: A Mixed View on Alternative Realities

In the course of the years, in the critical debate about *Vineland* there have been two dominant views: a) that *Vineland* is the expression of a nostalgic reflection on a bygone decade

and its possibilities in the wake of Reagan's Presidency and repression, which leaves out any redemption in the end, and b) that the novel, alongside a nostalgic tone, offers meaningful hints regarding the possibility of a redemptive solution, which makes it more than a mere craving for the past.

Cowart has suggested that *Vineland* "retains a myth that its author celebrates rather than deconstructs. Pynchon's setting is a representation of the American land; and he refuses to surrender the myth of American promise" (*Attenuated Postmodernism* 9). If that is the case, perhaps one can read the Traverse-Becker family reunion at the end of the novel as a positive sign. After all, Brock Vond, the novel's symbol of the totalitarian force of repression, is taken to "Tsorrek, the land of death" (*VL* 328), by Vato and Blood.

However, things are most often not as cogent as they might seem in Pynchon's fiction. Addressing the California novels together, Thomas Schaub maintains that while "*Lot 49* is a novel about the possibility of revolution" (31), in *Vineland* "Pynchon is less interested in the possibilities for alternative communities" (34) and depicts "that feeling after Nixon's election of the nation having stepped back from the cusp of radical transformation" (37). Rushdie wrote that in *Vineland* "the entropy's still flowing, but there's something new to report, some faint possibility of redemption, some fleeting hints of happiness and grace." Regarding the Nixon-Reagan era, he maintains that although these Republican Presidents preached the values of "family" and "community," they "stole," "warped," and used them "as weapons of control" against America. It is in this context of political spin doctoring that *Vineland* "seeks to recapture" those values "by remembering what they meant before the dirt got thrown all over them, by recalling the beauty of Frenesi Gates before she turned." In a continuity with the themes of community and connection in *Vineland*, later in *Against the Day* Pynchon expounds on family issues where the novel's ending brings to us a series of family reunions. John Miller has observed that "the many reunions woven into the California chapters do create a sense of at least temporary resolution. The reunions represent small victories over linear time" (196).

Although Prairie's "summoning" (*VL* 332) of Brock to come back and take her with him after his failed attempt to kidnap her casts doubt on the happy family gathering in the end, I believe that a critical spatial analysis of the novel can throw light on the possibility of an alternative reality and some measure of redemption in the novel as a whole. Hector Zuñiga tells Zoyd that none of the "sixties people" (26) "was saved" (27): "One OD'd on the line at Tommy's waitín for a burger,

one got into some words in a parkin lot with the wrong gentleman, one took a tumble in a faraway land, so on, more 'n half of 'em currently on the run, and you so far around the bend you don't even see it, that's what became of your happy household." This shows the fading of the hippie ideals and the countercultural possibilities in the 1980s America. Having been deprived of their freedom by Brock's system of policing, these Sixties youth have had a hard time coming to terms with the status quo. In a mocking tone, Hector tells Zoyd, "'Still simmerín away with those same old feelings, I see — figured you'd be mellower by now, maybe some reconciliation with reality'" (26). Nevertheless, it does not seem that Pynchon ceases there to merely yearn for the old days.

As already discussed, the retreat of this group of hippie radicals into a suburban Northern California town, seen from a geocritical analysis as an act of resistance, keeps the flame of hope alive in their lives. However transient and fragile, *Vineland* suggests the possibility of an alternative reality, "a commitment to an alternative, communitarian idea of America" in Cyrus Patell's words (172), that denies to be subsumed by the dominant order of power in America.

Chapter Three

Inherent Vice

1. Introduction

1.1. From the 2000s back to the Sixties: America's Political Present Seen through the Historical Optic of the 1960s

With *Inherent Vice*, published in 2009, Pynchon goes back to the American 1960s when the youth counterculture promised new possibilities for America. For the third time Pynchon writes a novel set in the "Long Sixties" (Marwick 9) but this fact might be also due to the 9/11 incident in the early 2000s that gave a particular direction to American politics. Writing about the Sixties from the perspective of the 2000s, Pynchon contemplates contemporary problems in our present political landscape. As David Cowart suggested in 2011, the political atmosphere depicted in *Inherent Vice* frequently mirrors "the polarization that, nasty enough in the Clinton years, manifested itself with particular virulence from 2004 (Bush's dubious victory over Gore) up to and after the election of Barack Obama" (*Dark Passages* 128). The present political situation in the U.S., almost 10 years after the publication of the novel, does reinforce the idea of political division between the left and the right. With the 2008 economic recession and the perpetual warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq, *Inherent Vice* reminds the reader of the divided American politics in the early years of the new century. As a narrative technique Pynchon uses the past to reflect on the present issues. For example, writing about WWII in *Gravity's Rainbow*, he deals with issues that resonate with the timeline in which he was writing the novel. The references to Nixon and Kennedy are among these passages where Pynchon dwells on the issue of liberty for the youth counterculture and the consequent repressive actions of the government against them. As we know from a January 21, 1974 unpublished letter to Pynchon's friends, authors David Shetzline and M. F. Beal, from New York, the author expressed his "disillusionment with national politics" (Krafft 11), writing four months after *Gravity's Rainbow* was published.[18] As Graham Benton has noted, "those who

[18] Pynchon, Thomas. Unpublished letter to David Shetzline and M. F. Beal, January 21, 1974.

(like Pynchon) have long advanced a grave concern for the loss of autonomy wrought by an increasingly powerful ideological state apparatus find themselves pinned by rhetoric and subsequent legislation … that further erode civil liberties" (41). Reminding the reader of several abusive policies of America's government in the late 1960s that have been reflected in the novel, *Inherent Vice* points to the significance of these issues and their influence on the political and historical outlook of the American society and its citizens in post-Nixon years.

1.2. "Back into the Net-Work of Points already known": Traces of the Sixties Counterculture in the Face of Nixonian Repression

> *All the time, somebody listens in, snoops; they bug your apartment, they tap your phone—*
>
> Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Inherent Vice's protagonist Larry "Doc" Sportello is a dope-smoking hippie private investigator and the owner of LSD INVESTIGATIONS – LSD standing (also) for "Location, Surveillance, Detection" – who lives in Gordita Beach, Los Angeles. The opening scene of the novel depicts a visit from Doc's ex-girlfriend Shasta Fay Hepworth, who has become the mistress of an influential real-estate tycoon named Mickey Wolfmann. According to Shasta, Mickey's wife is planning to lock him up in a mental health institution because Mickey has decided to give away his assets. As Doc begins to look into Mickey's case, the real-estate developer is kidnapped. At this point, Pynchon's novel sets in motion a quest in which Doc becomes involved with the grid of Mickey's business interests and its connections with criminal and police sources, including a prominent LAPD detective called Bigfoot Bjornsen. In the course of his investigations about Mickey's disappearance, Doc comes across Coy Harlingen, a saxophone player who is believed to have died of a heroin overdose. Coy tells Doc about a mysterious schooner, the Golden Fang, an old ship apparently involved in trafficking suspicious goods into the port as well as a sort of conspiracy. Through a file provided by his old PI-partner Fritz Drybeam, Doc has the chance to read "a brief history of the schooner *Preserved*" (95) which reveals its connections to the CIA and its anti-communist operations around the world. It becomes clear that at some point the mysterious schooner "was on some spy mission against Fidel Castro" where "she brought weapons in to anti-Communist guerrillas, including those at the ill-fated Bay of Pigs." Under the name of Golden

Fang, "She ran CIA heroin from the Golden Triangle. She monitored radio traffic off unfriendly coastlines and forwarded it to agencies in Washington, D.C." In Las Vegas, Doc suspects that he has seen Mickey together with federal agents and later hears of his plan to tackle a housing project in the desert in order to atone for his past as a ruthless land developer. Upon his visit to the site, however, Doc learns that Mickey has been reprogrammed and development will not be continued. Later, pursuing the Golden Fang with his lawyer, Doc watches the schooner being abandoned as it is faced with a huge surf wave. At the end of the novel Coy, who has been working as a government snitch without permission to visit his family, is reunited with his wife and daughter. Doc's girlfriend Shasta comes finally back to him and the novel ends as he is driving on the freeway, waiting for the fog to be cleared.

Promising to bring back "law and order" to the streets of America in favor of "the great silent majority," Richard Nixon became the 37th President of the United States in 1969. One of his biggest campaign promises was the end of the war in Vietnam. However, American involvement in the war did not finish until 1973. This issue brought about a high level of tension and many cases of conflict with the countercultural movements of the American youth. With the benefit of hindsight, *Inherent Vice* alludes to several significant cases of clash between the hippie movement and the U.S. government's policies of control and surveillance. Indeed, recent Pynchon criticism has shown particular attention to political matters in his fiction. Samuel Thomas' *Pynchon and the Political*, Diana Benea's *The Political Imagination of Thomas Pynchon's Later Novels*, Joanna Freer's *Politics and Counterculture*, and other critical works have demonstrated different approaches to reading the political aspect of his work. *Inherent Vice* offers interesting insights into the political dimension of Pynchon's oeuvre and its involvement with the Sixties counterculture. For instance, in chapter eight the narrator asks a rhetorical question regarding the suppression of the countercultural activities by the government forces:

> Was it possible, that at every gathering—concert, peace rally, love-in, be-in, and freak-in, here, up north, back East, wherever—those dark crews had been busy all along, reclaiming the music, the resistance to power, the sexual desire from epic to everyday, all they could sweep up, for the ancient forces of greed and fear? (130)

The government agents, "those dark crews," are always surveilling the hippie gatherings and readily suppress them. In fact, their goal is to "sweep up" any type of protest or resistance to

government authority out of their "greed and fear." These two words could have broader meanings in the historical and political context of the novel. "Fear" could be related to the repressive actions of Nixon's administration and his agents in surveilling anything that might go against their political interests, as the above example makes clear. History has shown that Nixon was a paranoid man who was always fearful of some conspiracy against him. For example, when on June 13, 1971, an article published by *The New York Times* revealed the Pentagon Papers, a secret history of the Vietnam War, Nixon immediately created a group, the White House Plumbers, to stop the leaking of classified information.[19] On July 1, 1971 he told his chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, "We're up against an enemy, a conspiracy." The second term "greed," on the other hand, refers to what the narrator mentions in a previous passage which is "the faithless money-driven world" (130). This description seems to underscore the overreaching power of capitalism that has driven the world for so long and, together with the American politics, has tried to subdue other systems of economic expansion and welfare for the nation.

Along the same lines, there is another intriguing passage in Pynchon's novel. At some point, Doc falls asleep at Penny Kimball's place, a junior DA and his lover, and when he wakes up he notices Nixon's face on TV giving a speech: "There are always the whiners and complainers who'll say, this is fascism. Well, fellow Americans, if it's Fascism for Freedom? *I . . . can . . . dig it*!" (120). His remark is welcomed by a lively applause from a huge group of his supporters which wakes Penny up: "What are you watching, sounds like yet another Hitler documentary." Nixon is giving a speech in L.A., at Century Plaza, addressing a rally of GOP activists called Vigilant California. As it becomes clear, Coy Harlingen works for this group as an informant. During the speech, a hippie starts to call Nixon bad names and makes fun of his dog which seems to be a reference to the famous Checkers speech: "Hey, Nixon! Hey, Tricky Dick! Fuck you! And you know what, hey, fuck Spiro, too! Fuck everybody in the First Fuckin Family! Fuck the dog, hey! Anybody know the dog's name? whatever—fuck the dog, too! Fuck all of you!" When he is dragged away by Vigilant California operatives, Nixon humorously says, "Better get him to a hippie drug clinic" (122). This passage shows the conflict between Nixon's policies and the hippie counterculture. Indeed, he is portrayed as a "fascist" sympathizer. However, the more important

[19] Weiner, Tim. "Transcripts of Nixon Tapes Show the Path to Watergate." *The New York Times*, 31 October 1997, https://www.nytimes.com/1997/10/31/us/transcripts-of-nixon-tapes-show the-path-to-watergate.html

point is the hypocrisy and dishonesty attributed to Nixon in this encounter. The hippie protester at the speech is indeed Coy who is paid by the same group, Vigilant California, to pretend to be a disrupting protestor. As Doc later relates to Bigfoot, his old LAPD detective nemesis, Coy "pretended to be an agitator at the Nixon rally" (138) while in fact working as a snitch for this supposedly GOP California activist group, which is a "private militia" (195) for LAPD.

Another important issue with regards to the Sixties counterculture and the reactionary policies of the U.S. government touched upon in *Inherent Vice*, is a generational gap between the American youth and the generations before them. When Doc goes to the Boards' house, a surf band for whom Coy had played, to look for him, he notices some habit taking shape among the hippies staying in the house, an atmosphere where "everybody he got introduced to greeted him with the same formula—'Where are you at, man?' suggesting a high level of discomfort, even fear" (129). The narrator recounts that this ritual

> seemed to be happening more and more lately, out in Greater Los Angeles, among gatherings of carefree youth and happy dopers, where Doc had begun to notice older men, there and not there, rigid, unsmiling, that he knew he'd seen before, not the faces necessarily but a defiant posture, an unwillingness to blur out, like everybody else at the psychedelic events of those days, beyond official envelopes of skin. Like the operatives who'd dragged away Coy Harlingen the other night at that rally at the Century Plaza. Doc knew these people, he'd seen enough of them in the course of business. They went out to collect cash debts, they broke rib cages, they got people fired, they kept an unforgiving eye on anything that might become a threat.

Here, we can see the difference between the hippie values and those of these older people in Los Angeles as well as the skepticism that they hold against the hippie culture. In fact, there is some similarity between these "unsmiling" older folks and those government operatives who keep a tight control on everybody and everything. Therefore, the second suggestion in this passage is a reference to the repressive actions of the police operatives, the "rigid" older men, and the consequent clash with the hippie value system. This matter of conflict is addressed more closely in the following paragraph in the novel. In fact, there is an interesting observation on the issue of the hippie culture in contrast with the capitalist agenda of America's government:

> If everything in this dream of prerevolution was in fact doomed to end and the faithless money-driven world to reassert its control over all the lives it felt entitled to touch, fondle, and molest, it would be agents like these, dutiful and silent, out doing the shitwork, who'd make it happen. (129-130)

This is a reflection on the hippie revolution, taking shape in the 1960s in America, through the countercultural movements which was, however, suppressed by the dominant power of the government under the control of capital. Indeed, federal agents like those who took Coy away at the Nixon rally are the ones who, at the direction of U.S. government, kill the hippie "dream of prerevolution" and make it possible for the ruthless "money-driven world" to perpetuate its control over the lives of American people.

The above two sections show that *Inherent Vice*, in a sort of double structure, addresses both the present political atmosphere through the historical lens of the 1960s and the political history of America in the late Sixties from the vantage of the twenty-first century. In doing so, Pynchon's novel deals with important issues such as the counterculture and the social and cultural space of freedom in the 1960s America. *Inherent Vice* engages the reader with the question whether a redemption can be recognized in the life of its protagonist. In fact, an important issue in this chapter is whether the California landscape can offer an alternative reality in Pynchon's novel. As Doc is waiting for "something else this time, somehow, to be there" (369) at the end of the novel, a redemptive solution might, or might not, exist in the text.

2. Toward *Inherent Vice*: Pynchon's Growing Engagement with Spatiality

A geocritical analysis of *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Vineland*, alongside other texts, revealed interesting insights as to the change in Pynchon's spatial vision. In *Vineland* the setting is mostly outside the urban flatland of Los Angeles, in a rural part of Northern California, as opposed to what happened in *Lot 49*, whose storyline, for the most part, unfolds in the urbanized areas of Southern California, such as Los Angeles, San Francesco and the fictional town of San Narciso. This movement from the urban land toward the nature has an important consequence in terms of the plot insofar as it becomes part of the resistance for the counterculture.

Doc Sportello, the protagonist of *Inherent Vice*, lives in Pynchon's invented Gordita Beach, Los Angeles. As we shall see in this chapter, the beach has a significant meaning in the novel, as far as the narrative is concerned, and is always present in the background. If in *Vineland* there are hints that Pynchon's spatial vision is moving in a different direction, this change becomes even more evident as we move toward his 2009 California novel. From *Vineland* to *Inherent Vice* the setting, for the most part, changes from the rural landscape of Northern California toward the beach. Nevertheless, since between the publication of *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice* Pynchon wrote two important novels in terms of space, it is essential to quickly look into some spatial aspects of these texts that can be useful in analyzing and understanding the change in *Inherent Vice.*

An important figure in the development of Pynchon's third California novel is the tycoon Mickey Wolfmann, whose real estate project Arrepentimiento is located in the desert outside of Las Vegas. As we learn from Doc's conversation with Fabian Fazzo, Kismet Chief Officer at Kismet Lounge and Casino in Las Vegas, Mickey "had this dream about putting up a whole city from scratch someday, out in the desert" (240). At one point, he decides to dedicate his assets to building free houses for people in need to atone for his past actions in that business. He was a ruthless real estate developer. As aunt Reet mentions to Doc, Mickey's last project before repentance was an "assault on the environment—some chipboard horror known as Channel View Estates?" (11). It was also an assault on the lives of many people in that neighborhood who lost their houses. The appropriation of land and open space against the backdrop of history is one of the main topics of Pynchon's 1997 novel *Mason & Dixon*. The surveyors' effort to draw a boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland indicates an engagement in the violent act of imposing an arbitrary, dividing line on the natural territory. The novel's mapping of the Mason-Dixon line suggests an alternative version of the foundation myth of America's colonial past in relation to the present where America's open space is shown as the symbol of "subjunctive Hopes" (*MD* 334). This suggests the original potential of America before its appropriation by the all-encompassing dynamic of national ideology. As the novel shows, British colonizers pursued their seizure of land and property in America where, according to Sascha Pöhlmann, open space was turned into "a governable territory" (223) with "a political body of governable people" (177) under the metanarrative of nationalism. Returning to *Inherent Vice*, in an important scene, Doc learns from Coy that Mickey might possibly be connected to the Golden Fang heroin cartel as he was seen as a passenger aboard the schooner. In fact, the Pacific Ocean is another central theme in the

novel through which Doc comes to know about the story of the lost continent of Lemuria, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Inherent Vice brings Pynchon's spatial awareness to a further stage where the beach, together with the Ocean, plays an important role in the text. With that in mind, I am going to investigate how Pynchon's spatial vision from *Vineland* to *Inherent Vice* develops.[20] On the urban level, I argue how an examination of Edward Soja's urban model "postmetropolitan transition" in *Inherent Vice* shows a different direction in Pynchon's metropolitan imagination. Dealing with the spaces of freedom and action against the dominant structure of power and control, *Inherent Vice* demonstrates an evolution in the political aspect of Pynchon's spatial representation during the course of years. Through an analysis of mythical spaces in the novel, not least the sunken continent of Lemuria, a later phase of Pynchon's treatment and understanding of supernatural places becomes clear. By analyzing space on theoretical level, I go on to concentrate on the notion of Thirdspace to tackle the issue of alternative realities and how the California landscape can provide a redemption in the novel. Following a geocritical analysis on urban, political, mythological, and theoretical levels, I argue how Pynchon's spatial imagination from *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice* evolves and, more importantly, what this change means for Pynchon Studies.

SECTION 1

2.1. *Inherent Vice* and the "postmetropolitan transition": From the City to the Beach

The definition of "postmetropolitan transition" elaborated in the previous chapters in terms of urban studies will be useful to analyze key episodes in *Inherent Vice* hinting at the development of this spatial trend in California's geographical history, as well as at their involvement with major cultural and political issues. In the first chapter of the novel, Tariq Khalil, a black former convict and militant, explains to Doc how his neighborhood has disappeared after his release from prison:

[20] So long as *Against the Day* is concerned, it provides the reader with episodes that open a different window into the spatial dimension of Pynchon's imagination. Near the end of the novel, as the Chums of Chance are cruising above an unfamiliar terrain, it dawns on them that they have gone off the map entirely and have come upon the "Counter-Earth" (1023). At the same time, it seems that they are "on the Earth they had never...left" (1026). In this peculiarly paradoxical condition, the Chums find themselves "lost" and yet "would be rescued" (1035). Stumbling on the Counter-Earth gives birth to the possibility of an alternative way of understanding the new terrain, "not exhausted by the geographical," other than the rationalized space of the map as they know it. This movement from the mapped to an undetermined space provides the boys with the possibility to move toward building a "supranational idea" (1087), instantiated in the ending scene of the novel in the annual gathering up above the sky.

"My old street gang. Artesia Crips. When I got out of Chino I went looking for some of them and found it ain't just them gone, but the turf itself" (17). What he finds in their place is a sign with Mickey Wolfmann's name on it as the site's builder. When Doc asks Tariq to show him this place on the map of the region, the area he "pointed to looked to be a fairly straight shot from here eastward down Artesia Boulevard, and Doc realized after a minute and a half of map-reading that it had to be the site of Channel View Estates."

Mickey's suburban development project is being built where previously an African-American neighborhood was situated, which had itself seized a Japanese-American area after WWII. Artesia is a city in southeast Los Angeles County where former First Lady Pat Nixon grew up as a child. This promises a potentially interesting connection between the location of Mickey's construction project in this California suburban area and Pat Nixon's childhood hometown. Nixon was one the New Right presidents who enormously contributed to the "urbanization of suburbia" in California. During his presidency real estate development through privatization policies grew faster in Southern California. As he himself mentioned in an interview, his birthplace Yorba Linda in Orange County was "an agricultural region and something of a playland" when he was a child. "It is now the engine of progress in America, an area where entrepreneurs are gathering to drive the American dream forward," said Nixon.[21] The small city of Artesia was no exception. Like many other cities in the region, after the postwar economic boom, Artesia underwent a development process where many residential tracts were built.

As Doc drives from Artesia to Channel View Estates, he notices "black pedestrians, bewildered as Tariq must have been, maybe also looking for the old neighborhood, for rooms lived in day after day, solid as the axes of space, now taken away into commotion and ruin." (19). Mickey's real estate development program in suburban California has ruined the lives of people, like Tariq, in this black neighborhood. Much like the tycoon Pierce Inverarity in *Lot 49*, Mickey is changing the shape of the California landscape at will and wants to create a whole city from zero in the desert. As it has been suggested, one reason why the California landscape in the postwar era was being rebuilt continuously "was a reactionary attempt at social control" (McClintock and Miller 42). After all, the geographical history of Southern California is one of real estate business and a continual rewriting of the landscape. Politics, of course, had a hand in reshaping the landscape.

[21] Nixon, Richard M. Interview by *Orange Coast*, July 1990: 77.

Pynchon's essay on the Watts riots of 1965 suggests that some urban planning policies were made in such a way to deliberately segregate the black by making it difficult for them to buy houses in certain real estate developments. As Scott McClintock and John Miller observe, "Reactionary politics flourished in the suburbs, particularly in the ex-urban areas like Orange County, where the John Birch Society was a particularly strong influence in local politics" (42). That is, the urbanization of California suburbia was in large part motivated by radical rightwing politics, supported by John Birch Society which promoted limited government and privatization policies. Indeed, real estate development was the key to realizing their goals. Such construction strategies, developed through their reactionary politics, affected the shape of the California landscape, as they implemented the development plans, and contributed to the gradual shaping of the "postmetropolitan transition." The gentrification of space by the political apparatus aimed at the creation of a homogenous "sedentary space" (Deleuze and Guattari 474) of closely defined order that served the purposes of social control. As Tariq tells Doc in the novel, such real estate programs as Channel View Estates are "More white man's revenge" (18) for the Watts riots which might be considered as an act of redlining.

A larger issue regarding the formation of urban trends in California and beyond, amongst many others, is the idea of America and what it means for the nation to experience it. As Kathryn Hume has observed, Pynchon often returns to the notion that "America took the wrong fork in the path, but above all on the issues of slavery, contempt for the preterite, and devastating beautiful landscapes with ugly, shoddy buildings and arbitrary lines cut through the wilderness" (311). One of these wrong forks in the path, as a long-lasting concern about America in *Inherent Vice* and Pynchon's work in general, is the dispossession of indigenous peoples of their lands by appropriating them for purposes of capital and control: "Long, sad history of L.A. land use, as Aunt Reet never tired of pointing out. Mexican families bounced out of Chavez Ravine to build Dodger Stadium, American Indians swept out of Bunker Hill for the Music Center, Tariq's neighborhood bulldozed aside for Channel View Estates" (*IV* 17). This passage recalls the colonial period in America when Mexicans and Indians were deprived of their native lands by force. This is a topic that Pynchon has amply addressed in *Mason & Dixon* through the issues of Indian massacres and African slavery and exploitation. As Dixon, in the novel, mentions to a revolutionary-minded American, what matters is "not how British treat Americans, […] 'tis how both of You treat the African Slaves, and the Indians Native here" (568).

However, the above quotation from *Inherent Vice* hints also at land development policies in more recent times in the postwar era that allowed for the seizure of Tariq's neighborhood by Mickey's Channel Estates: "Beginning on Artesia, signs directed Doc to Channel View Estates, A Michael Wolfmann Concept" (19). Channel Estates as a "Mickey concept" reminds us of Inverarity's San Narciso which is "a grouping of concepts" (*CL* 13). In this respect, Arrepentimiento, the never built city in the desert, is a concept of Mickey's devising, much similar to San Narciso that is an entirely artificial construction. Like San Narciso, Arrepentimiento is an example of the urbanization of California suburbs. However, contrary to San Narciso, it was meant to provide free housing for the dispossessed; an idea that does not obey the logic of capitalist exploitation. In fact, it is when Mickey starts this utopian project that he is kidnapped. In this respect, the conceptual characteristic of San Narciso and Channel Estates implies significant points such as the imposition of human will on the landscape for capitalist interests. These issues underscore suburban development policies in California in the Sixties and afterward, through privatization regulations under Reagan as governor and later on when he was elected president. As it becomes clear in the novel, "Owing to Governor Reagan's shutdown of most of the state mental facilities, the private sector had been trying in its way to pick up some of the slack, soon in fact becoming a standard California child-rearing resource" (172).

Writing *Inherent Vice* from the perspective of the 2000s, however, there is a noticeable difference between Mickey Wolfmann's and Pierce Inverarity's construction projects in *Lot 49*. Mickey's idea is to build housing in the desert which goes beyond suburbia and has something to do with arid nature. This ongoing construction leaning toward the nature is also evident from the novel's video trailer that foreshadows the beach as a comfortable site of development for real estate moguls. In an unprecedented action, in 2009, Pynchon narrated an advertisement video for his novel *Inherent Vice*.[22] In that promotional video, he tells us that here there used to be Gordita Beach, California, but "Later on all this is gonna be high rise, high rent, high intensity." Gordita Beach is a suburb in the South Bay area of Los Angeles County that is partially modelled after Manhattan Beach, where Pynchon lived in 1969-70. John Krafft has observed that Pynchon lived "in Manhattan Beach, near Los Angeles, from roughly the mid-1960s to at least the early 1970s" (11) and "then mostly in various places around California through the 1980s" (10). In such a short

[22] Pynchon's only public appearances before this were in two episodes of *The Simpsons* in 2004 in which he lent his voice to a funny version of himself with a brown paper bag over his head.

video trailer that lasts less than three minutes, one of the most important issues is the change of the California landscape where Gordita Beach is going to be turned into a real estate development hub.

Vineland already hinted at a change in Pynchon's depiction of suburbia where nature becomes part of the resistance for the counterculture. While in *Lot 49* the plot unfolds for the most part in the urban cityscape of Los Angeles and the suburban, invented town of San Narciso, *Vineland*'s story line is mainly set beyond the urban landscape of Los Angeles in a rural part of Northern California in fictional Vineland County where the counterculture has found refuge after its demise. This somehow showed that in *Vineland* Soja's urban form "postmetropolitan transition" does not completely hold true, because in 1990, when Pynchon published the novel, a new spatial trend was taking shape that Soja himself defined as "restructuring-generated crisis."[23] Only two years after the publication of Mike Davis' apocalyptic *City of Quartz* in 1990, the Rodney King riots broke out that showed the onset of a new metropolitan period of crises originating out of the new social and spatial conditions of postmetropolitan urbanism. *Lot 49*, and to some extent *Vineland*, instantiated the "urbanization of suburbia," but *Inherent Vice* shows that Soja's original pattern of "postmetropolitan transition" no longer applies. While this is not to say that the older ways of looking at spatial change and urban restructuring were wrong, as the conditions changed over time new spatial interpretations were required. Analyzing the change from *Vineland* to *Inherent Vice* is a much compelling case of comparison. Not only do both novels mostly share the same setting but, in terms of timeline, *Vineland*'s past, recounted from the viewpoint of the 1980s, is approximately *Inherent Vice*'s present. Therefore, Pynchon describes two different territories in California in these two novels that help us see the change in his spatial imagination from 1990 to 2009.

In *Inherent Vice*, the beach is shown to be a place where construction is concentrated and the territory beyond the suburbia, besides the area in and around L.A., is the place where real-estate businessmen like Mickey are interested in investing. If in *Lot 49* the setting is mostly the urban flatland and in *Vineland* there is a movement toward the rural landscape of Northern California, the setting of *Inherent Vice* takes a step further toward the natural environment where the beach has a strong and meaningful presence, alongside the urban landscape. This new trend

[23] For the definition of "restructuring-generated crisis," see Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, USA: Blackwell P, 1996.

shows Pynchon's growing awareness of nature and the importance of the beach as the last frontier in the general imagination of the American nation and at the same time indicates a new crisis as a result of the ongoing development of the California suburbia. In fact, the beach is so important in *Inherent Vice* that it is like a pivot around which the rest of the novel rotates.

In other words, as a result of "restructuring-generated crisis," the natural, once peripheral area of the beach has become so central that a new spatial interpretation is needed to describe this urban change. For instance, in *Lot 49* we learn that the road is "a vein nourishing the mainliner L.A., keeping it happy, coherent, protected from pain" (14). In *Inherent Vice*, however, it always takes us to the suburban area and the beach, as on the last page of the novel. This signals a spatial change where the periphery and beyond are becoming more central than the center itself. Since Soja's urban pattern "postmetropolitan transition" cannot justify the new spatial order, a better way to describe this new trend might be Michael Dear and Steven Flusty's 1998 model of urbanism. Both these urban forms belong to the L.A. School of Urbanism, as opposed to the Chicago School characterized by a modernist vision of the industrial metropolis. However, Dear and Flusty's model is more recent, well-organized, and suitable to read Pynchon's 2009 novel insofar as their conception of "postmodern urbanism" clearly argued for the existence of a distinctively different School of Urbanism that originated from studies on Southern California. In "Postmodern urbanism," the scholars define "citistāt" (63) as a "collective world city" where the periphery is "omnipresent" and "the hinterland organizes the center." In terms of urbanism, we can even think of Pynchon's oeuvre on its own as an example reinforcing the L.A. School model.

If we consider Pynchon's smaller novels situated in California in relation to his bigger, historical novels, we can say that they demonstrate a connection between the local and the global. The shorter novels represent a periphery in relation to the world novels that stand for the global dimension of his work. In this respect, the structure of the production of Pynchon's fiction itself highlights the L.A. form of urban design as well as the continuous interaction between the center and the periphery. Nevertheless, the last phase of Pynchon's spatial thought offers something more than what we have already seen in his previous work which to some extant overlaps with Dear and Flusty's urban model. As an example, in both *Inherent Vice* and *Bleeding Edge* Pynchon deals with the issue of the Internet and cyber systems of control. The online space of surveillance in its interaction with the narrative and the characters in the novels can be explained through the above critics' more developed understanding of urbanism because one important feature of "citistāt" is

that it includes fragmented parts such as "cyburbia (those hooked into the electronic world) and cyberia (those who are not)" (65); a characteristic that is absent from Soja's model. Turning to the spatial change in *Inherent Vice*, the fundamental presence of the beach in the novel shows Pynchon's attention to the nature beyond California suburbia which is in tune with the "reterritorialization" of the urban process in "citistāt" in which the periphery and the land beyond it have a central function.

In "Going to the beach with Thomas Pynchon," Jeff Simon calls *Inherent Vice* "an authentic Thomas Pynchon beach novel." Indeed, the novel begins and ends with Pynchon's fictional Gordita Beach in L.A. The beach plays an important role both as a Southern California setting in the novel in its interaction with the narrative and also in the way it connects to Pynchon's own life from an extratextual standpoint. In this respect, at issue are at least two main points. First, the significance of Gordita Beach in terms of referent and representation in its involvement with social and political events against the backdrop of history and, second, how such observations interact with the development of the narrative and characters. As with imaginary San Narciso in *Lot 49* and the Trasero County in *Vineland*, some of the more important issues that often pop up are the questions of the natural and built geographies of California, the development of its suburbia for political purposes of control, sustaining capitalism after the 1973-74 economic recession, the emergence and fading of the counterculture, and the clash between the forces of resistance and independence and the agents of determinacy and oppression.

Gordita Beach is a fictional Southern California surfer town and the base of operations for *Inherent Vice*'s protagonist. As it has been widely agreed, Pynchon's invented Gordita Beach seems to refer to Manhattan Beach in L.A. where he once lived. On the ending page of the novel, Doc is on the Santa Monica freeway which later intersects with the San Diego, moving toward south. Pynchon Wiki suggests that the sequence of the freeways, street names, and off-ramps points to Manhattan Beach. Gordita Beach, of course, first appeared in *Vineland*. It is the place where the ex-hippie Zoyd Wheeler lives with her daughter Prairie: "Zoyd was living down south then, sharing a house in Gordita Beach with elements of a surf band he'd been playing keyboard in since junior high, the Corvairs, along with friends more and less transient" (22). But Pynchon's affection for Gordita Beach goes even further back to the 1960s when he was writing *Lot 49*. According to Garrison Frost, "it is entirely possible that Pynchon was living in or around Manhattan Beach while he was writing *The Crying of Lot 49*." He explains that

> Although most of the book takes place in Northern California, at the very beginning Oedipa journeys down south to the town of San Narciso to visit with a lawyer named Metzger. The obvious play on the word 'narc' immediately brings to mind Hall's characterization of the Manhattan Beach's anti-drug police state.

There is also general consensus that around 1969 or 1970 Pynchon wrote a significant part of *Gravity's Rainbow* while living in a small beach apartment in Manhattan Beach. Taking these hints into consideration, from his early career to the later phase, we can observe a continuity in Pynchon's depiction of Gordita Beach, and viewed more wildly, Southern California in all his California novels. It is, therefore, compelling to understand how a certain place can provide insights into Pynchon's life and career as well as the way it contributes to the experience of reading the novel.

Analyzing Soja's urban model "postmetropolitan transition" in the California trilogy, it becomes clear that Pynchon's spatial vision of the city, and more broadly his spatial imagination, changes in a significant but constant manner from *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice*. This development in the representation of space, in urban terms, indicates a new way of understanding the city structure that cannot be explained through the classical models of urban planning. An examination of that urban form in *Lot 49* showed interesting insights regarding the narrative. In Pynchon's first California novel Soja's model was relevant to analyze the spatial aspect of the novel because the text was written before 1966 which was the starting point for Soja to trace and define the "crisis-generated restructuring" of L.A. in the social and spatial aftermath of the Watts riots. Two years before the 1992 Los Angeles riots, Pynchon's second California novel showed that his urban awareness was already taking a different direction. By the time Pynchon was writing *Inherent Vice* Soja's original urban model was almost out of date where the novel depicted signs of a change in his spatial understanding of city design that is more in tune with the more recent and updated model of postmodern urbanism by Dear and Flusty.

Having described the mechanism of change in the urban imagination of Pynchon from *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice,* we can see that a change has been taking shape in his spatial understanding of city structure. In these three novels, the settings, as the spatial centers of focus in the texts where the plots unfold, move in large part in a constant manner respectively from the urban flatland of Los Angeles, to the rural, natural area of Vineland County, to the end of the natural frontier in California that is the beach. Obviously in *Vineland* and in *Inherent Vice* there are references to the

urban atmosphere of Los Angeles as in *Lot 49* there is the fictional suburban presence of San Narciso. However, considering the novels in their entirety, such a geocritical analysis provides fundamental insights into Pynchon Studies insofar as we can observe his fiction through original lenses. In other words, it becomes possible to understand how and why Pynchon's spatial imagination throughout his career changes. In this respect, *Vineland* depicts a difference in his career, which is the difference between *Vineland* and the works before and after it. By giving us the chance to view the change in the spatial construction of the urban setting in Pynchon's novels from *Lot 49* to *Vineland* and from *Vineland to Inherent Vice*, geocriticism allows us to see the change in the big picture of Pynchon's career which we observe between *Vineland* and the pre and post-*Vineland* novels.

2.2. "Under the paving stones, the beach!": Political/Historical Space

In discussing the poetics of spatiality, Soja suggests that the "regional-geographical-spatial emphasis is not meant to exclude sociology, anthropology, political science, or any other way of studying the city and urban issues, but emphasis is given to scholarship and scholars that demonstrate a strong spatial perspective" (*My Los Angeles*, 13). This description, which in part informs also my understanding of geocriticism, indicates that in dealing with space, and spatiality in general, we endeavor to discover and investigate the intricate historical, social, and political phenomena closely connected to the spatial analyses.

Starting my discussion with the beach, in *Inherent Vice* it is a place that can best be described in terms of liminality. In the evenings, it hosts the stewardesses who seek fun where "flatland guys" (*IV* 8) go "for a night of hustling stewardesses." The fact that the stewardesses occasionally stop by the beach to have fun and then leave the place reinforces the idea of temporariness of the beach as a passage point just like the airport. Indeed, Doc's office in Gordita beach is located near the airport. Besides, Pynchon's promo video as well mentions that the stewardesses "live in Gordita cause it's close to the airport" and "tend to hang out between flights and the bars up and down the street." The liminal quality of Gordita Beach makes it a place that can offer some possibility of redemption while, at the same time, being a dangerous place. This is arguably the case also with the roads, as I have already mentioned, insofar as Pynchon's fiction does not lend itself to any ultimate teleological reading. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Berressem has used the metaphor of "the body without organs" (30) to refer

to the beach as a place "that is not organized by powers of command and control and, as such, a true plane of immanence" (Berressem 54). In this respect, the beach can be described as a space that is characterized by "a state of transgressivity" (Westphal 41) which "corresponds to the crossing of a boundary beyond which stretches a marginal space of freedom" (47). In *Inherent Vice*, there are cops who hunt for hippies on the beach but at the same time the hippies, like Doc, could be private eyes. The beach, in fact, represents the dialectics of federal forces of power and control against countercultural energies of the youth protesters. The anti-establishment movement of the youth is a form of "transgression" insofar as "it flees from the heart of the system, from the space of reference." In the clash between the peripheral and central powers, the beach provides the hippies with some centrifugal power that resists the "striation" (Deleuze and Guattari 479) of their space of resistance by political forces. A "transgressive" (Westphal 37) space of liminality, the beach acts as a possible alternative "territory of germination" (Zaccaria 18), allowing some measure of freedom for the hippie movement. The slogan that Pynchon uses as the epigraph of the novel creates a direct connection between the beach and the counterculture: "under the paving stones, the beach!" It connects Los Angeles to Paris in May 1968, where the student rebellion took place, and invokes a politically revolutionary spirit. Indeed, it portrays the beach as a place of resistance that often escapes political control.[24] In the transformational years of the late Sixties in America, the beach was a reference point for the hippie counterculture and home to its music, lifestyle, and politics. The decade was witness to many protests against the policies of the U.S. government in the form of countercultural movements. Consequently, there were often clashes between the protesters and the federal forces which are reflected in *Inherent Vice*.

Pynchon's narrator recounts that Mickey "was known to be a generous Reagan contributor" (95) and it "came as no big surprise" that he "might be active in some anti-Communist crusade." When Doc is spotted for the third time, this time at Kismet Lounge and Casino in Las Vegas, by special agents Flatweet and Borderline, the federal agent Flatweet tells him that

[24] The idea of the beach as a dynamic space, allowing the possibility of resistance against the political apparatus, can be read in relation to Henri Lefebvre's examination of the heterogeneous quality of space in *The Production of Space*. He argues that "space 'is' whole and broken, global and fragmented, at one and the same time. Just as it is at once conceived, perceived, and directly lived" (355-356). In such a composite space, marked by heterogeneity, there is a part that often escapes political control which might be described as the space of resistance.

> It's you hippies. You're making everybody crazy. We'd always assumed that Michael's conscience would never be a problem. After all his years of never appearing to have one. Suddenly he decides to change his life and give away millions to an assortment of degenerates—Negroes, longhairs, drifters. Do you know what he said? We have it on tape. 'I feel as if I've awakened from a dream of a crime for which I can never atone, an act I can never go back and choose not to commit. I can't believe I spent my whole life making people pay for shelter, when it ought to've been free. It's just so obvious.' (244)

Agent Flatweet blames the hippies for the awakening of Mickey's conscience and his decision to provide shelter for poor people. This passage underscores the contrast of values and the conflict between the government's greedy agenda, in the pursuit of its capitalist interests, and the hippie ideals highlighted through the characterization of the real estate tycoon's moral conundrum. Boris, one of Mickey's bodyguards, tells Doc that he happened to hear a conversation between him and Shasta in which "What Mickey said was, 'I wish I could undo what I did, I know I can't, but I bet I can make the money start to flow a different direction'" (150). As the anarchist preacher the Reverend Moss Gatlin, in *Against the Day*, mentions, "when you reach a point in your life when you understand who is fucking who ... that's when you're obliged to choose how much you'll go along with" (87). Experiencing a sort of ethical conversion, Mickey chooses to reverse his course of action for atonement. However, the federal agents are not happy with the real estate mogul's decision and try to impede him from giving away his money. As Boris mentions, "This was the deepest shit he could get in." Indeed, before Doc can conclude the case, Mickey is retrieved by shadowy forces and his mind is reset to the capitalist mode. In the end, his idea of Arrepentimiento as free housing for people remains nothing more than "the myth of American promise" (Cowart, *Dark Passages* 118).

When Tariq reveals to Doc the details of his pact with Glen Charlock, a murdered bodyguard of Mickey Wolfmann, the two men together with Glen's sister, and Tariq's lover, Clancy go to a pizza place named Plastic Nickel, where the walls are "decorated with silvery plastic reproductions of the heads side of a U.S. five-cent coin" (293). As it becomes clear, every now and then Thomas Jefferson, on one of these coins on the walls, "turned from left profile to full face … and spoke to selected dopers, usually quoting from the Declaration of Independence or the Bill of Rights" (294). The narrator relates that "Tonight he waited till Clancy and Tariq had both headed back to the toilets, turned quickly to Doc." In an acid trip between Jefferson and Doc, there is a

reflection on the notion of American freedom and democracy. In a satirical conversation, he tells Doc that the "the tree of Liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." Doc wonders, "what about when the patriots and tyrants turn out to be the same people?" just "like, we've got this president now." Jefferson replies, "As long as they bleed," it "is the thing." The idea of liberty as the foundation of American democracy is shown to grow on tyrants and patriots' blood. The problem, according to Doc, is that the tyrants and the patriots might be exactly the same people such as the incumbent U.S. President, Richard Nixon. In this exchange, we can observe a parody of the idea of liberty in America which, historically, hints at the larger picture of the events that took place in the political panorama of the American nation. Taken into consideration in the context of the 1960s cultural protests, and the consequent backlash on the part of Nixon's administration, the above conversation between Doc and Jefferson challenges fundamental ideas regarding the American experience and its meaning. This is emphasized through the idea of America and its ideals, including liberty and democracy, in contrast to repressive state policies of surveillance.

These passages from the novel show that the protestors constantly tried to open a space of action which they had been robbed of by the overreaching official order. In the midst of the repression of the regime, the goal of the youth counterculture was to achieve some space of freedom to realize new possibilities for them. This issue is nothing new in *Inherent Vice* insofar as in *Vineland*, and in part in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon had already dealt with it. However, from the viewpoint of the 2000s, *Inherent Vice* goes back to the late 1960s and recounts the story of the dope-smoking hippie Doc in his investigations. Relating the history of that decade serves Pynchon as a technique to contemplate and challenge the present political atmosphere. Although the novel delves into America's postwar past and extensively deals with the conflict between reactionary forces and redemptive energies in the American Sixties, the political atmosphere described in the novel seems to have parallels with the American politics of the twenty-first century. A good example is the dividing political party preferences over the important issues facing America's future and people's lives today. David Cowart has argued that "*Inherent Vice*, though set in the sixties, addresses the antipathy of left and right in terms somewhat more conducive to prospect than to retrospect" (*Dark Passages* 128). He contends that in *Inherent Vice* "the political climate evoked seems frequently to mirror the appalling polarization obtaining in the first decade of the twenty-first century" that we can still observe in the overt partisan politics of Capitol Hill in

Washington. In the Sixties, the polarization between the nation and their politicians was due, among other things, to the war in Vietnam with Nixon's continuation of the war and the countercultural movements' increasing dissatisfaction. More importantly, the Watergate scandal initiated a trend of party polarization which caused many people to lose faith in the office of the President.

In a scene in the novel, Doc's marine lawyer Sauncho together with a posse of the Justice Department identify a cargo belonging to the Golden Fang, dumped in the ocean as fake US currency—bills with Nixon's face on them. As we learn from Sauncho's intelligence contacts in the novel, "it had been common CIA practice for a while to put Nixon's face on phony North Vietnamese bills, as part of a scheme to destabilize the enemy currency by airdropping millions of these fakes during routine bombing raids over the north." In this passage, there are explicit references to the issue of the Vietnam War and Nixon's fraudulent policies in dealing with it as well as the CIA's role in that war and its strong hold in America's government and its policy making. Such events had a significant influence on the political and historical outlook of the American society and its citizens in post-Nixon years up to the present day.

In another part of the text, when Doc is handcuffed by Puck Beaverton, a bodyguard for Mickey, he is told a story about one of Adrian Prussia's clients "from the LAPD Vice Squad who … happened to mention a certain pornographer and pimp at the fringes of the movie business … whom the Department seemed uncommonly eager to be done with" (321). Adrian is a loan shark in cahoots with LAPD and is asked by one client to get rid of this pimp. As we discover, the pornographer has kept "detailed files on a sex ring based in Sacramento, and was threatening now to blow the whistle unless he got paid." Since "even the minor allegations in his story … would be enough to bring down the administration of Governor Reagan," LAPD decides that Adrian should kill the pimp and do "American history a big favor" by helping out Reagan who is "the future of America." The pornographer is kidnapped and taken to Adrian. Puck recounts to Doc that, after mutilating the pimp, they threw his corpse in a cement-mixer miles away at a freeway under construction which every time made Adrian wonder "how many of the columns he saw might have stiffs inside them" (323). In a mocking way he comments, "'Brings new meaning,' … "to the expression 'pillar of the community.'" In fact, he has a friend at the freeway construction site who uses the victims' corpses as material for columns in building the freeway. As the narrator says, the columns are like "a vertical tomb."

The freeway construction is associated with killing humans and using their dead bodies as material for construction. This reminds us of a similar scene in *Lot 49* where Pynchon dwells on the same theme. From the narration, we learn about the bones of the American soldiers from WWII, drowned at the bottom of "Lago di Pietà" in Italy, which were brought to San Narciso by Tony Jaguar and sold to Inverarity for the decoration of his lake and the entertainment of scuba divers. The bigger picture here is that of the capitalist system which uses the modern human as an instrument to achieve its economic goals by imposing its hegemony on society. It is, in effect, as though the cost of constructing the freeway, under Reagan's policies and the incumbent administration**,** were the life of its citizens. To Adrian, mixing victims' bodies with concrete, in order to make freeway columns, is creating "new meaning" in the community and strengthening its "pillars." The idea of people as pillars of the community, in this passage, points to the hidden reality that they are used as instruments in the ever-growing system of American capitalism without being properly rewarded. They are, indeed, small pieces of concrete in that huge machine that runs on their lives.

In the end, one can see a progression among the California novels in the way their author deals with the space of protest and dissent from a historical point of view. In *Lot 49*, Pynchon was writing in the middle of the revolutionary fervor of the counterculture which reflects the zeitgeist of the decade. Through Oedipa's visit to the University of Berkeley, Pynchon depicted the change in the campus dynamic and the youth attitude; a completely new experience for the protagonist. Tristero itself shows, par excellence, the hope of subversion and new possibilities for people in the political panorama of America where the young people tried to create some space of freedom and action for themselves inside the prevailing system of control that constantly deprived them of social and cultural liberties. Pynchon's second California novel depicts the demise of the countercultural energies under the repressive order of political surveillance by Nixon and Reagan administrations where the space of liberty and possibility, much desired in *Lot 49*, is pretty much subdued and/or coopted by the repression of the government. Such is the case with Zoyd Wheeler who is not able to do anything fruitful or produce any meaningful work insofar as his life is conditioned and controlled by the violent actions of the federal agent Brock Vond. The cooption of Frenesi by Brock is another example of the death of the spirit of the counterculture in the novel. If *Lot 49* promises some hope of freedom for the protesters and *Vineland* shows the fading trend of such spaces of dissent and action, *Inherent Vice* retrospectively reflects upon the present

political atmosphere and asks the reader if it is possible to identify some space of possibility for the American nation and resist the cooption of America itself by the dominating "agencies of command and control" (265). Analyzing the spaces of protest in the California trilogy contributes to a better understanding of the changing body of Pynchon's fiction over the years.

2.3. Space on Fictional/Mythological Level: From the Beach to the Ocean

> *What It Means To Be An American …: It means do what they tell you and take what they give you and don't go on strike or their soldiers will shoot you down.*
>
> Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day*

The California beach has been long considered as a place of promise in the popular American imaginary. It is the geographical end of the expansion of Western civilization and is famous for the myth that it bears. As Richard Rodriguez has written, it is "The end of the road. Or a second shot at the future" (273). In the cultural imagination of America, the myth of California, esp. Southern California, stands for a promise of new possibilities, hope for the future, and alternative ways of living. Situated on the final far western edge of the European civilization, the California beach has been the best last resort for the world civilization which Pynchon attends to and, at the same time, undercuts in the California trilogy, and elsewhere. In *Inherent Vice*, he addresses the myth of California as a "promised land" where the Pacific beach echoes the dialectics of promise and despair as "the site of struggles to assert control and independence" (McClintock and Miller 4). A good example is the important presence of the Pacific Ocean in the novel in relation to the drowned continent of Lemuria that opens a new window into Pynchon's spatial thought, namely the space of fictional and mythological places in the novel.

Inherent Vice starts with the private investigator Doc going up and down the freeways in Gordita Beach, and ends on the freeway with a landscape of the Ocean as Doc finds himself in the dense Pacific fog, imagining "a moment of situated hope" (Lynd 32).[25] Gordita Beach and the

[25] Drawing on Donna Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges," in "Situated Fictions," Margaret Lynd defines the notion of "situated hope" as "a hopefulness that is grounded in always apparently simple and spontaneous gestures of kindness, generosity, and courage that individuals may—and sometimes do—summon unexpectedly at any given moment without hope of redemption or gain." See bibliography, page 137.

Pacific Ocean play an important role, in several ways, in shaping the narrative structure in Pynchon's novel insofar as they are like a connecting thread that helps understand the development of the text.

As we read *Inherent Vice*, we become aware of the increasing presence of the Pacific Ocean, the ultimate harbor of hope and the American/Californian dream that the West promised. The Ocean, as the end of the natural frontier in America, can be related to the story of Lemurians in the novel. According to the original myth of Lemuria it is a lost island located in the Pacific or Indian Ocean. Previous 19th century accounts of the mythological continent suggest that it existed in ancient times and drowned beneath the ocean as a result of cataclysmic change. With the emergence of the more modern theory of plate tectonics, the notion of Lemuria as a sunken island was discredited by the scientific community. The plate tectonics theory argued that the original landmass containing India and Madagascar broke apart but did not sink beneath sea level. It is also worth noting that Lemuria is believed to share some characteristics with another drowned mythological landmass called Atlantis, which Pynchon mentions in his novel. Just like Lemuria, Atlantis was believed to have been sunk at the bottom of the Ocean in ancient times. Going back to Plato's early account of the fictional island, Atlantis loses the deities' approval and submerges into the Atlantic Ocean. Following that story, many scientists up until the 20th century tried to locate the place of the lost continent. However, as the theory of continental drift increasingly gained popularity in the 1960s, it became clear that the existence of the lost continent of Atlantis in the geologically recent past was not possible.

In *Inherent Vice*, Lemuria is a recurring image whose whereabouts cannot be pinned down, except at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. In one of Doc's acid trips, the survivors of Lemuria have taken refuge on the California coast, as he runs into them.[26] The drowned continent, believed to reemerge someday, provides the author with the possibility to portray a mythical space, entailing an ongoing struggle between the subsuming forces of control and the surviving energies of anarchy. Such questions abound in a novel which directs attention to the role of mythological places, and more generally spatiality. Such is the case when Pynchon invokes real and imagined historical incidents and dwells on their engagement with more recent issues, such as the American counterculture of the 1960s, at local level as well as bigger problems, including capitalism and its ruling mechanisms, at global level.

[26] See *Inherent Vice*, page 108.

The example of Lemuria, among many others in the novel, indicates that Pynchon is a writer who has a strong sense of space and place in his literary representations as a well-developed, conscious theme. An analysis of fictional spaces, such as those of the Thanatoids or the w*oge*, in *Vineland* demonstrated a shift in Pynchon's depiction of mythical places in comparison with *Lot 49*. While the Tristero represented an imaginary space of possibility that can be described in terms of liminality, or an interstice, *Vineland*'s depiction of mythological spaces has a more definite tone to it. The Tristero is a line of communication that is marked by invisibility and can be seen only by the WASTE members. It is as though it were an imaginary space inside the real space, which is in tune with the pending scene at the end of the novel where the protagonist awaits a revelation. In *Vineland*, the mythical space of the Thanatoids, and the *Woge* for that matter, is associated with the faith of the Sixties counterculture. Although these, too, are liminal spaces, they demonstrate the decline of the possibilities that were left hanging at the end of *Lot 49* and provide a more nostalgic image of the 1960s. Writing about late Sixties in 2009, in *Inherent Vice* Pynchon's representation of supernatural places becomes even more nostalgic where the California beach is the last possible place to offer any redemption. In this respect, the image of Lemuria in the novel resonates with the Pacific Ocean as the last frontier of American dream which hopefully might offer "something else," as the novel comes to an end.

The lost continent of Lemuria interacts with a number of important issues in *Inherent Vice*. The narrator relates that the Lemurians have harbored in the Southern California coast as their only refuge. This is, of course, a reminder of the decline of the hippie movement: in the wake of Nixon's Presidency, they have no other shelter but the beach. From the narration, we learn that the continent of Lemuria is sunk to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean and its lost survivors reside in exile and feel nostalgic about their original homeland. This reminds us of the fate of the hippie counterculture that was subdued by government control. As part of that system of control and surveillance, Pynchon's text suggests that the tube and the media in general manipulate the general sensation about social and cultural issues. A prominent example is the waning of the countercultural energies and the fate of the survived Lemurians in the novel. As the narrator recounts:

> People in this town saw only what they'd all agreed to see, they believed what was on the tube or in the morning papers half of them read while they were driving to work on the freeway, and it was all their dream about being wised up, about the truth setting them free.

> What good was Lemuria to them? Especially when it turned out to be a place they'd been exiled from too long ago to remember. (315)

The theme of TV as a means of shaping and influencing public opinion has always been an issue of concern to Pynchon. In *Inherent Vice,* for instance, Coy pretends to be a hippie freak, trying to disrupt Nixon's speech to "a rally of GOP activists who called themselves Vigilant California" (121). He calls Nixon bad names and makes fun of his dog which is a reference to Nixon's awareness of the power of the tube in saving his candidacy for the Vice President of the U.S.[27] However, the more important point here is that just like drowned Lemuria that is of no importance to the American nation, even if it returned "surfacing this way in the lost heart of L.A.," the countercultural movements are on the path to oblivion.

In another scene, when Doc's friend and former employee, Sortilège, introduces him to her spiritual teacher, the guru Vehi Fairfield, he takes Doc on two acid trips. During the second one, Doc finds himself "in the vividly lit ruin of an ancient city that was, and also wasn't, everyday Greater L.A." (109). It is interesting that the ancient city is, and is not, similar to L.A. Indeed, "Everybody living at the beach, for example, Doc and all his neighbors, were and were not refugees from the disaster which had submerged Lemuria thousands of years ago. Seeking areas of land they believed to be safe, they had settled on the coast of California." Suddenly, Doc has some vision in which he sees connections between drowned Lemuria and the colonization of lands in the war in Indochina by the U.S., which was "imagining itself to be fighting in Southeast Asia out of free will." The narrator relates that the U.S. was "in fact repeating a karmic loop as old as the geography of those oceans, with Nixon a descendant of Atlantis just as Ho Chi Minh was of Lemuria, because for tens of thousands of years all wars in Indochina had really been proxy wars." This points, among other things, to the American colonization of Southeastern Asian lands and, with Ho Chi Minh as a descendent of Lemuria, there is a direct connection between the ruin of the ancient continent and the fate of its survived inhabitants on the coast of California. In his acid trip, when the Lemurian spirit guide Kamukea takes Doc above the Pacific, he tells the protagonist of *Inherent Vice* that he must find his way back on his own: "the Lemurian was gone, and Doc was left at his negligible altitude to find his way out of a vortex of corroded history, to evade somehow a future that seemed dark whichever way he turned" (110). In the above passage, the actions of the

[27] See *Inherent Vice,* page 122.

U.S. in this part of the world are invoked. The mention of Nixon underscores his policies of war in Vietnam and its consequences on the U.S. where the future of the nation in the eyes of its citizens seems to be dark, as the hippie private eye of the novel senses in his trip.

Along the same lines, there is an episode in the novel that signals the significance of Lemuria in its interaction with the narrative. When Doc receives a postcard, apparently from Shasta, he looks at the picture on the front which is "a photo taken underwater of the ruins of some ancient city" (167). There are "broken columns and arches and collapsed retaining walls." This sounds familiar to Doc which makes him look for "a photo credit, a copyright date, a place of origin" to realize where or what this city is. After smoking a joint, he deduces that this must be "a message from someplace besides a Pacific island whose name he couldn't pronounce." Given that different episodes in the novel mention Lemuria, these clues could hint that the place on Shasta's postcard might be the sunken continent in the Pacific Ocean. Whether the city is Lemuria or not, after looking at its ruins on the postcard and having a joint, Doc decides to go back to an address that he was given by a "Ouija-board" belonging to Sortilège. One day at Sortilège's house, she had told Doc and Shasta about her Ouija board and Doc had wondered if it could tell where to get some dope. The board gave them an address but when Doc and Shasta arrived at the location they found no dope at all: "After hours of detouring for landslides and traffic jams and accidents, Doc and Shasta finally located the mystically revealed dope dealer's address, which turned out to be an empty lot with a gigantic excavation in it, between a laundromat and an Orange Julius–plus–car wash, all of them closed" (165). Looking at the photo on Shasta's postcard, Doc returns to the same address, this time with his friend Denis, to find that "The hole in the ground was gone, and in its place rose a strangely futuristic building" (167). It appears that this building is the headquarters of the Golden Fang.

Bringing together these two episodes might have an important implication. On the one hand, the narrator tells us about Doc's memory with Shasta in the past when they had gone to the address given by the Ouija board and, on the other, we learn about Doc's noticing the ruins of the ancient city on Shasta's postcard at present, which leads him to discovering the future-like Golden Fang building. The suggestion could be that there is a connection between drowned Lemuria and the construction of the Golden Fang headquarters. The history of the Lemurians, who have taken refuge on the California coast in exile, has some similarities to the fate of the youth counterculture of the 1960s. Metaphorically speaking, the above episodes together suggest that the Golden Fang

is building its shadowy business, of money laundering and importing and exporting heroin into and out of the U.S. through the Pacific, on the ruins of Lemuria. The Golden Fang is developing its capitalist interests, perhaps in connection with LAPD and the government as suggested through the U.S. currency with Nixon's face, on the basis of usurping the energies of the American population at present and of those who originally lived in America. Considering the larger picture, it might suggest that American capitalism has built its foundation on the exploitation of human and natural resources of the world in creating its own future. In *Against the Day*, Pynchon portrays a similar picture through the idea of construction and the ruins. Somewhere in the middle of Pynchon's longest novel we learn about the fictional town of Wall o' Death "built around the remains of a carnival, one of many inspired by the old Chicago Fair" (476). Since the White City, at the heart of the Chicago Fair, was meant to set a historically new urban model for future cities, Utku Mogultay has argued, Wall o' Death "is built on the ruins of the city of tomorrow" (1). Likewise, in *Inherent Vice* there is the Golden Fang building of the future that has established its capitalist foundation on the premise of exploiting the past and present resources of the land, such as the ruins of ancient Lemuria which Pynchon uses in a figurative manner.

Returning to the epigraph at the beginning of this part (2.3.), a quotation from *Against the Day*, we can notice that one of Pynchon's long-lasting concerns in his work is America as an idea and a nation and what it means to be an American. In *Inherent Vice*, as elsewhere, Pynchon parodies the idea of freedom and democracy in American society. For instance, Hope Harlingen, Coy's wife, tells Doc that "Coy and I, all we saw was the freedom —from that endless middle-class cycle of choices that are no choices at all—a world of hassle reduced to the one simple issue of scoring" (38). In *Against the Day*, when the Chums of Chance approach the White City from afar, the city that was meant to set an American urban paradigm for the future of the world, we are already given an idea of its spatial order that the Chums perceive in terms of "a progressive reduction of choices" (15). Without going into further instances from other novels, Pynchon's fiction deals with and challenges the question of what America means and stands for. In doing so, there is a criticism of the capitalist system in contrast with such notions as freedom, anarchy, and improvisation. At the same time, Pynchon's depiction of California in his work shows a sort of anxiety that "things had better work here, because here, beneath that immense bleached sky, is where we run out of continent" (Didion 172).

With this in mind, it is important to remember that in almost all of Pynchon's novels there is some sort of reference to supernatural places such as the mythical location "Vheissu" in *V.*, the imaginary territories of the Thanatoids or the *Woge* in *Vineland*, the mythological land of Shambhala in *Against the Day*, and the disappeared continents of Lemuria and Atlantis in *Inherent Vice*. The creation of these metaphysical places in the novels helps the author come up with alternative ways of portraying space and time and create, among other things, a narrative that challenges the official, already accepted understanding of the world order. These mythical, anomalous spaces can be described as a sort of counter-map to the static space of the map as we know it. In *Mason & Dixon*, for instance, there is a small "Wedge" of ambiguous territory, neither in Maryland or Pennsylvania, which creates a kind of uncharted alternate domain in the novel. It is an unexpected angle in the territory which comes out of some calculation errors of the lines by the surveyors. An anomalous space, the "Wedge" is the reflection of a territory that does not lend itself to any measurement. It is resists rationality and as much as the surveyors try to map that territory, there is always something that escapes their calculations. As we learn from Pynchon's narrator in *Inherent Vice*, "the map is not the territory." In fact, the "Wedge" in *Mason & Dixon* can be connected to the end of *Inherent Vice* and the theme of the fog where Doc cannot make out the way in front of him, which again emphasizes the idea of an alternative possibility through resistance to the controlled order of the world.

To bring this part to an end, it is useful to mention that an analysis of the mythological space of sunken Lemuria in the novel sheds light on the change in Pynchon's spatial imagination from *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice.* Like the lost continent of Lemuria, whose inhabitants live in exile and in the desire that one day it may resurface from the Ocean, Pynchon's depiction of the counterculture has a nostalgic tone. Although *Vineland* too depicts the disillusionment of the hippie counterculture and its withdrawal to a rural part of Northern California, *Inherent Vice* shows a somewhat different image insofar as the Pacific beach plays an important role in accentuating the myth of California as the last possible hope for the nation. As the novel comes to an end, the Ocean emanates a fog which makes Doc contemplate the idea of "communitas" as a way of connection to other drivers on the freeway and, thus, the possibility of an alternative reality to the dominant order of the status quo. The last of the California novels, *Inherent Vice* is more nostalgic than *Vineland*. At the same time in some way the novel tries to keep alive the promise of a better America. From *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice* there is a change in Pynchon's depiction of metaphysical

places where we can better understand and situate these spatial anomalies. In his first California novel the imaginary space of the Tristero is supposed to offer some sort of subversion where the "preterite," the "disinherited," and more generally the working-class America would come upon some salvation, as might Oedipa. *Vineland*'s supernatural space of Thanatoids shows that such possibility of subversion for working-class America, left hanging at the end of *Lot 49*, has not come to any fruition 24 years later. The murdered math professor and leader of PR^3, Weed Atman connects the faith of the counterculture to the realm of the Thanatoids in Bardo where they exist, and do not exist simultaneously.

In fact, the critique of *Vineland*'s ending by different scholars has offered such a two-way conclusion where some critics believe in redemption while others are more pessimistic about it. 19 years later, *Inherent Vice* shows once again the same nostalgic tone of *Vineland*. Nevertheless, this time Pynchon's portrayal of the Pacific fog might offer "something else," which could be what Oedipa waited for long ago. In the trajectory of the California novels, Pynchon constantly, but in different ways, deals with the issue of redemption through fictional places and he was affected by the periods in which he wrote the novels. In *Lot 49*, he was writing in the midst of the counterculture and the possibilities that it promised. In *Vineland*, a middle-aged writer showed his disillusionment with the hippie counterculture and America itself. In *Inherent Vice*, an older author, a husband, and a father nostalgically tries to keep the promise of America alive while, at the same time, denouncing its mistakes. This process of change in the depiction of mythical spaces is useful in understanding the change in the larger picture of Pynchon's spatial imagination from an earlier stage to *Vineland*, as a middle point in his career, and from *Vineland* onward toward a later stage in *Inherent Vice*.

SECTION 2

2.4. The Hope of Redemption in *Inherent Vice*

Visiting Mickey's housing project Arrepentimiento together with his friend Tito, Mickey's driver, Doc discovers the place to be an abandoned construction site. The narrator relates that "here was Doc, on the natch, caught in a low-level bummer he couldn't find a way out of" (*IV* 254). Doc wonders how the decade of the psychedelic Sixties is coming to an end and this little beam of light may be gone forever and taken away by darkness. In the following passage, there seems to be a reference to the war on drugs and other Nixon policies that subdued the hippie movement and its

hope for a better America. To render the idea of the fading countercultural possibilities, the narrator uses the metaphor of "a certain hand" (255) that "might reach terribly out of darkness and reclaim the time, easy as taking a joint from a doper and stubbing it out for good."

Inherent Vice is a late contemplation of the 1960s and what was supposed to redeem the American society. If *Lot 49* shows the countercultural energies that Oedipa feels for a revelation to come and *Vineland* demonstrates their diminishing trend, *Inherent Vice* is much nostalgic about those possibilities and shows the failure of the countercultural protests. When Doc goes to the Golden Fang headquarters with his friend Denis, they meet Dr. Blatnoyd and Japonica Fenway who is being treated there. As Doc and Denis take a ride in their car, they go past Wallach's Music City "where each of a long row of audition booths inside had its own lighted window facing the street" (143). At each window, they see "a hippie freak or small party of hippie freaks, each listening on headphones to a different rock 'n' roll album and moving around at a different rhythm," which is not what Doc and Denis are used to as a rock concert. Rather, their idea is more of a pleasant and peaceful communal experience with

> outdoor concerts where thousands of people congregated to listen to music for free, and where it all got sort of blended together into a single public self, because everybody was having the same experience. But here, each person was listening in solitude, confinement and mutual silence, and some of them later at the register would actually be spending money to hear rock 'n' roll.

The hippie dream of an alternative America seems to have failed and taken a different direction in *Inherent Vice*. This is further reinforced by the fact that Mickey experiences a sort of conversion but is later kidnapped, reprogrammed, and sent back to the capitalist mode of thought.

An important question in *Inherent Vice* is whether it offers any redemption in shaping the future of America. The novel was released a couple of months into Obama's Presidency and, as Simonetti has observed, an analysis of the text in relation to "Obama's politics of 'collective redemption' may help situate Pynchon's writing in the contemporary context of post-9/11 fiction, emphasizing the ethical aspects of his writing" (288). It has been argued that the later phase of Pynchon's career has been marked with a sort of sentimentality that makes it plausible to think of the idea of redemption in his work in terms of communal values. Drawing on Nadine Attewell's discussion of the opposition between "postmodern irony and postmodern nostalgia" (22), Freer

has suggested that "from *Vineland* onwards, the basic tenor of the writing is sentimental" (144). Looking at the course of Pynchon's career, we realize how the isolated characters of his early work, who usually experience socio-political inability in confrontation with the forces of control, become part of more communal forms of society, in his later novels, whence they might exercise resistance to power. In the end, *Inherent Vice*'s doomed detective may "still be saved if he understands that his quest leads to something deeper than the culprit, something that has more to do with moral commitment and social responsibility than with an unreachable, already flawed, and finally useless truth" (Simonetti 296).

While these critics suggest some form of redemptive possibility in Pynchon's novel, beyond postmodernism's original subversive appeal, there is also a counter argument to it. Hume has suggested that in *Inherent Vice* Pynchon "is exploring a worst-case scenario: nothing exists beyond what we see in the material world" (2). She goes on to say that "No other level of reality offers us any escape or compensation or alternative or hope." Still other scholars believe that the novel does not completely leave out the possibility of redemption, nor does it particularly demonstrate any alternative realities. McClintock and Miller argue that "Doc wins a partial victory, reuniting a family and dispatching a small-time bad guy, but conceding the larger cultural victory to the powers-that-be" (40). The idea that a partial redemption might exist in the end, while yielding to the larger framework of power, can be described as a "hopeful hopelessness" (929), to use Martin Paul Eve's words. Nevertheless, even if it were the case, not attaining any revelation at the end of the quest does not necessarily mean that there are no alternative ways of understanding the world. Molly Hite has observed that "failure to attain revelation is a hallmark of Pynchon's questing heroes" (22). Indeed, there are other narrative techniques through which Pynchon suggests the possibility of a redemptive solution in his later work. If he expresses his disappointment with the way things have developed in America from the very beginning, there are always hints that keep us searching for something to challenge the status quo. The idea of collectivity is, for instance, among the alternative solutions to consider. Pynchon's post-*Vineland* work shows an awareness of a sort of redemption that, similar to Paul Goodman's constructivist theory of social anarchism, is achieved by "social freedom, freedom lived in community with others" (qtd. in Cohn 62).

In offering such redemptive energies, California plays a significant role. In this respect, in *Inherent Vice*, and the trilogy in general, the West Coast is shown as a place that promises the

American dream and at the same time might only be a mirage. There are promising moments in the California novels, even if transitory and ephemeral, that try to crack the harsh surface of reality and produce "something else;" something to be hopeful about and fight for. As one character says in *Inherent Vice*, for Americans California is "like fate" (238). Indeed, Doc's lawyer, observing the "dezombified" (341) Golden Fang off the coast of California, tells him in a dream, "May we trust that this blessed ship is bound for some better shore, some undrowned Lemuria, risen and redeemed, where the American fate, mercifully, failed to transpire."

2.5. Space on a Theoretical Level: Reading *Inherent Vice*'s California for Alternative Realities

The history of California, esp. Southern California, shows it as a place of opportunity and promise to which people moved in the hope of gaining wealth and building their personal lives. Noting that the theme of the American dream and its discontents are a significant part of California literature, Scott McClintock and John Miller, among others, observe that the genre of noir is its most characteristic expression. They suggest that "California's sunny but often ephemeral landscape provided an ideal setting" (40) for the ironic visions of Hollywood screenwriters producing classic noir films. The quality of ephemerality underscores the idea of liminality in *Inherent Vice* delivered through the natural geography and the built landscape of California. The landscape as a place that is constructed and reconstructed is "ephemeral" and could become "modular" (Millard 71). The beach, for instance, is a significant place where there is the threshold of revelation. As Berressem has suggested, "It is a locus amoenus" (54), that is, "a liminal space" where natural elements shape a "felicitous, free arrangement" although at times "the atmosphere can become literally crude." This goes together with the depiction of the fog on the last page of the novel where there is the suggestion of an alternative reality, intimated by the California landscape, to the rigidly structured system of control in the era of Nixonite repression. Emanating from the Ocean, the fog suggests a new way of experiencing the built California landscape, as a sort of a counter-map. As Doc drives on the freeway, he might experience some collective consciousness with others on the road inspired by the natural geography of the land.

The novel's last lines are, to some extent, similar to *Lot 49*'s ending where waiting for some revelation is suggested. If Oedipa has to wait for some illumination regarding "the Tristero 'forgeries'" (110), driving along the San Diego Freeway *Inherent Vice*'s protagonist is waiting

"For the fog to burn away, and for something else this time, somehow, to be there instead" (369). That "something else" can have different interpretations. Some critics have argued that it suggests the possibility of some redemption in the novel and the idea that Pynchon's third California novel, albeit nostalgic about the 1960s possibilities in America, shows a hint of hope for the future of the country. Scott Macleod holds that "Pynchon is gently suggesting a cathartic resolution to the volatility and fragmentation that existed in California" (131) in the 1960s.

As far as my analysis is concerned, the important part in "something else" is the word *else*. Pynchon often plays with the idea of a third alternative beyond the already accepted ways of interpreting the world at large. This is evident all across his work. In *Inherent Vice else*, as I understand it, is the suggestion of that third alternative which proposes the possibility of "an-Other" reality. This alternative possibility can be explained in terms of "thirding-as-Othering;" a category that lies at the heart of Soja's Thirdspace. For him, and much so for Henri Lefebvre, the principal takeaway from Thirdspace is the idea of *thirding* which is understood in terms of "adding a third element to break up binary oppositions" (Westphal 71). This different perception of life for Doc reinforces the idea of liminality at the end of the novel suggested by Pynchon's narrator in "something else." "Radically open to additional othernesses, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge" (*Thirdspace* 61), Thirdspace proposes "an antidote against any efforts to build up grand narratives, permanent constructions, or totalizations" (Westphal 71). In this respect, the California suburban landscape in the novel provides the chance of a new, but temporary, awareness in the life of its protagonist. "Something else" does not obviously offer any tangible alternatives which is in tune with the ephemeral quality of the landscape's fog. Pynchon's depiction of the submerged continents of Lemuria and Atlantis in the novel is a case in point. These lost civilizations that might, or might not, have existed are sunk to the bottom of the Oceans and are believed to reemerge to the surface one day. Nevertheless, as in Oedipa's fleeting moment of "mysterious consensus" (*CL* 82) in the dance with the "deaf-mute delegates," it is this transitory characteristic that leaves open the possibility of a third alternative beyond the purview of the official systems of capital and control. As Stephen Hock has argued "Rather than mapping out a specific location, these moments in Pynchon's California novels … remind us of that other America of the figurative 'Vineland the Good' still waiting to be discovered" (219). Indeed, the California freeway of *Inherent Vice*'s final page suggests an alternative reality for Doc which might be described in terms of "urbanism as a way of life" (Soja, *My Los Angeles* 13). That is, the

suburban landscape and the freeway offer a possibility of redemption, a momentary and different perception of life against the grid of power, that the protagonist perceives in terms of a communal experience with other people driving on the freeway in the Pacific fog.

On that score, there is another episode in the novel that yokes together the California landscape with the issues of technology and the Internet. Bringing these subjects together offers interesting insights in terms of the possibility of an alternative reality in the text. In a conversation, near the end of the novel, Sparky explains to Doc how ARPAnet is going to change the world in the future as the network "moves exponentially" (365). Later, Doc faces a heavy fog where he can barely make out the freeway in front of him. The narrator reminds us that "maybe he'd have to just keep driving, down past Long Beach, down through Orange County, and San Diego, and across a border where nobody could tell anymore in the fog who was Mexican, who was Anglo, who was anybody" (369). These two, very close, scenes in the novel show a sharp contrast between Sparky's clear vision of the future, in which ARPAnet would determine everything, and Doc's foggy vision of the freeway. It is as if it were almost deliberate on the part of the author to undercut, or at least resist, the hegemonic outlook of this technological system that would command and order the world. Considering the bigger picture, Doc's foggy vision seems to emphasize, among other things, the importance of resistance to the hegemony of the systems of control, such as the Internet, whose greed of surveillance is insatiable. It further seems to suggest the contrast between the old-fashioned styles of community, like the Northern California woods community of ex-hippies to which *Vineland*'s Zoyd has withdrawn, and the technological networks of people online. The possibility of some degree of freedom in the freeway foggy vision reinforces the idea of a transient position that grants a momentary relief to *Inherent Vice*'s protagonist and the readers of the novel to be hopeful about the future.

Thirdspace is a "floating concept" (Westphal 72) with an epistemology that is "constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions" (71-72). One way to describe it is a "movement" (72) or "crossing in defiance of established norms." The evolving characteristic of Thirdspace emphasizes opposition to dominant structures of control and favors transient but fruitful social constructions. Therefore, it underscores the unmappable quality of "something else" in the novel which promises a new possibility to hang on to, even though a frail one. In the shady world of the Golden Fang and its malign activities, the landscape might offer a temporary alternative reality like that "little parenthesis of light" (254) in "the psychedelic Sixties" before it

"might close after all, and all be lost, taken back into darkness." As Berressem has suggested, in the ending paragraph of the novel, it is as though "For the shortest of moments, the beach has prevailed against the urban and suburban machinations of the Golden Fang" (59).

Notwithstanding the possibility of alternative worlds suggested by the California landscape in conjunction with the concept of Thirdspace, the intricate structure that characterizes all Pynchon's novels makes any attempt to assign a univocal meaning to the alternative realities inscribed in his novels inadequate, and in this regard, *Inherent Vice* is no exception. My understanding of Thirdspace in the California trilogy is informed by the sense that as we move from *Lot 49* to and *Vineland*, and *Inherent Vice*, Pynchon's fiction goes through different stages of spatial representation. In *Lot 49*, there is a possibility of Thirdspace that can be described in terms of resistance to power through the withdrawal of the WASTE members. In *Vineland*, there is a somewhat similar situation. However, the remainder of the counterculture has withdrawn to a peripheral part of Vineland County, due to the pressure by the federal government, and the act of resistance as a group to the dominant system of power is weakened. Moving on to *Inherent Vice*, a Thirdspace seems to become possible again but in a different way insofar as many years have passed after the publication of *Lot 49* and the third California novel looks back at the Sixties through the lenses of the 21st century. Taking into consideration the span of some 43 years between the publication of the first and the last California novels, an analysis of Thirdspace shows how Pynchon's philosophy of alternative spaces of reality develops. In terms of postmodern theory and Pynchon Studies, it could mean that while the initial phase of his work is marked by the creation of imaginary worlds that are more promising, in the later phase they take a different direction that is characterized by the 21-century atmosphere.

Conclusion

As regards the importance of California and the West Coast in the general imagination of the American nation, a significant scene, among many others, appears in *Inherent Vice*: when the protagonist Doc Sportello goes to Kismet Lounge and Casino in Las Vegas, he meets a girl named Lark. She tells Doc about her boyfriend, a professor at UNLV, who thinks "when Americans move any distance, they stick to lines of latitude" (238). She mentions that "it was like fate for me, I was always supposed to head due west." This passage is interesting on two counts: on the one hand, it shows the significance of the West Coast in the cultural imaginary of Americans as a place that symbolizes hope and redemption, which has been suggested in Pynchon's text. Moving westward, as Lark says in the novel, is "like fate" for Americans. Furthermore, it directs attention to a larger spatial pattern in Pynchon's novels which often interacts with the genre of detective fiction. Apart from the California trilogy, where we are directly dealing with the West Coast, almost all of Pynchon's other novels instantiate, to varying degrees, this tendency to move toward west in the end.

The final segment of *Gravity's Rainbow* shows a rocket positioned right above the fictional Orpheus theater in L.A. The importance of the California space can be further emphasized by the presence of the Los Angeles movie theatre manager Richard M. Zhlubb, the adenoidal Nixon figure, cruising L.A. freeways. At the end of *Against the Day* we observe a series of family reunions in Southern California in the 1920s. Besides these two encyclopedic novels that show "California turns" (Miller 182), ending by turning to California, Pynchon's other big, historical novel *Mason & Dixon* shows the drawing of the line dividing Pennsylvania from Maryland. In doing so, there is a constant movement toward west where the surveyors Mason and Dixon impose an artificial line on the natural territory and take control of the irrational open space of America. One can also claim that although Pynchon's most recent novel *Bleeding Edge* is set in New York City, it includes significant references, albeit in a different manner, to the California space. As McClintock and Miller have observed, *Bleeding Edge* is "sprinkled with brief recollections of California by secondary characters who, like Pynchon himself, have transplanted themselves Back East" (14). These reflections on the space of California in Pynchon's fiction serve to emphasize that it is an important part of his spatial imagination in its interaction with significant matters in

the novels, including capitalism and its subsuming mechanisms, social and political systems of control and oppression, anarchy, liberty, determinism, and so forth.

In terms of spatiality, a geocritical analysis of the California trilogy showed how Pynchon's spatial vision on four different levels has evolved in the course of time. An analysis of the urban/metropolitan spaces in the California trilogy, through Soja's urban form "postmetropolitan transition," showed that a change has taken place in Pynchon's spatial understanding of city structure. In these three novels, the settings of the stories move constantly, and for the most part, from the urban flatland of Los Angeles in *Lot 49* to rural Vineland County in a natural area of Northern California in *Vineland*, and finally, to the end of the geographical frontier in California, the Pacific beach, in *Inherent Vice*.

Moving on to fictional/mythological spaces, by tracking the development of Pynchon's depiction of metaphysical places, from *Lot 49* to *Inherent Vice*, we can better understand and situate these anomalous spaces. In his first California novel, the fictive space of the Tristero promised some sort of subversive energy through which the "preterite," the "disinherited," like the protagonist Oedipa Maas, would discover some revelation. The mythological space of Thanatoids in *Vineland* shows that the hope of subversion for working-class America, pending at the end of *Lot 49*, has not been realized after 24 years. Still 19 years later, an analysis of the mythical space of the sunken continent of Lemuria, in relation to the fate of the 1960s counterculture, conveys once again the same nostalgic tone in *Vineland*. However, this time Pynchon's portrayal of the fog originating out of the Pacific Ocean might offer "something else," which could fulfill the hope of redemption that Oedipa waited for long ago.

An investigation of political/historical spaces showed a progression among the California novels in their interaction with the space of protest and dissent from a historical point of view. *Lot 49* was written in the middle of the revolutionary years of the 1960s which reflects the spirit of the decade and the possibilities that it promised for the nation. Oedipa's search of the mysterious communication system the Tristero is representative, among other things, of the space of freedom and action that the American youth tried to create for themselves against the dominant system of control which aimed at depriving them of cultural and political liberties. Pynchon's second California novel shows the repressive order of political surveillance by Nixon-Reagan administrations that has subsumed the countercultural energies where that space of liberty and possibility, desired in *Lot 49*, is in large part subdued. *Inherent Vice* goes back in time to

contemplate the present political situation. Retrospectively, the novel seems to pose to us the question whether it is still possible to come up with some space of possibility for the American nation and resist the cooption of America itself by the dominating "agencies of command and control" (265).

Finally, I dealt with the theoretical concept of Thirdspace in the trilogy through which I endeavored to show how Pynchon's spatial imagination, in terms of alternative realities, evolves in the course of time. In the first California novel, I argued that we can imagine a Thirdspace in the form of resistance to power instantiated through the withdrawal of the WASTE members. In *Vineland*, with the decline of the counterculture, a group of ex-hippies has withdrawn to a marginal part of Northern California due to the pressure by the government forces which makes their act of silent resistance a weaker case of the production of Thirdspace. Looking back at the Sixties through the lenses of the 21st century, in *Inherent Vice* a Thirdspace seems to germinate again, even though in a different manner because many years have passed after the publication of *Lot 49*. These four levels of geocritical analysis help to show how Pynchon's spatial understanding in the course of his career, esp. in the California novels, changes. In terms of Pynchon Studies, the application of the geocritical approach to the novels allows us to see his fiction through an original perspective. In this respect, we can observe the change in the larger picture of his career in terms of works produced before and after *Vineland*. In other words, these spatial analyses help better understand the much-discussed idea that *Vineland* is a turning point in Pynchon's fiction where his work starts to move in a different direction.

Nevertheless, a more comprehensive analysis of the California space should include all of Pynchon's novels insofar as almost all of his fiction deals with that space in one way or another. The significance and development of Pynchon's spatial imagination in relation to the California space is by no means exhausted by this thesis, or for that matter, by the already existing related critical work. There is much work still to be done in this field, which undoubtedly will offer up many more paths of investigation and provide the basis for stimulating discussion for years to come. For instance, I did not take into account the fact that in nearly all of Pynchon's novels, but to different degrees, there is a "detective fiction paradigm." Near the end of *Against the Day*, Lew Basnight becomes the typical hard-boiled detective in the 1920s Los Angeles. At the beginning of his career, he works as an operative for a Chicago-based detective agency spying on anarchists. However, as time goes by, he is taken to London to do detective work for a mystical secret

organization. Finally, he finds himself in the West Coast where he enacts the role of hard-boiled detective, trying to track down a missing woman. Analyzing these three different urban scenarios, from Chicago in the 1890s to London in the 1900s and finally to Los Angeles in the 1920s can provide intriguing insights in terms of the interrelation between the urban space and the detective genre. For instance, Mogultay has argued that through Lew's "ambulatory" (163) exploration of the Chicago cityscape, Pynchon challenges the conventional idea that the figure of the detective can offer "reassuring representations of urban space" (Howell 360). In *Gravity's Rainbow* Tyrone Slothrop undertakes a paranoid quest to understand his past and himself which turns into a restless wandering through the Zone until he becomes disembodied. However, the protagonist's wanderings in his complicated quest has significant implications. The Zone might be a place where space, in a strictly defined and highly nationalized world, can be redefined "for a little while" (*GR* 556). For example, Pöhlmann considers the Zone "as an exemplary space for postnationalism to deprivilege the dominance of nation-ness" (286). One can think of the Zone as a sort of "non-place" (75). Marc Augé has argued that "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place" (77-78). In this respect, Slothrop's wanderings during his quest through the Zone can be analyzed in terms of the expression of the cartographic mapping of a "non-place." *Bleeding Edge* is a detective story where the female protagonist Maxine Tarnow is running a fraud investigation business on the Upper West Side, following a number of small-scale con artists. The novel unfolds a set of connected, malign activities in New York, bespoken by the Internet as the symbol of a "set of invisible links" (*BE* 167). Such links connect "the city in its seething foul incoherence." We can consider the digital space of the Internet in the novel as a sort of cyber city in itself insofar as it is a virtual space that is, nonetheless, present throughout the city. Furthermore, the program DeepArcher, too, represents a virtual space from out of the American West Coast. As Inger Dalsgaard has argued "To Maxine, the Internet is just another landscape" (165) which may help her "track down a redeemable villain" in her detective investigations. *V.* shows the quest of one of the protagonists, Herbert Stencil, who tries to identify and locate the mysterious entity, perhaps a woman, he knows only as "V." Through his search, the reader comes across different spatiotemporal contexts with "chapters set in various locations in Europe and Africa between 1898 and 1943" (Herman 23). Tracking down these historical chapters could offer significant insights in terms of cartography and mapping in relation to important

themes in the novel such as colonialism. The three California novels, too, can be considered as detective stories. Given that almost all of the novels deal with the space of California and develop some detective story, a geocritical analysis of that space in relation to the genre of detective fiction can produce a better reading experience of the novels and a clearer understanding of the California space as a possible redemptive setting in Pynchon's fiction.

To take another possible avenue of research, we can think of Pynchon's debut novel where the shape of the letter V might show two different paths of development in Pynchon's thought and career.[28] *V.* is a novel that develops a sort of interwoven double structure where there are two story lines: the contemporary frame, the novel's present between the years 1955 and 1956, and the historical sections from 1898 to 1943 with no chronological order. As such, it presents two protagonists: the discharged navy sailor Benny Profane and Herbert Stencil who tries to discover the location and identity of a supposedly mysterious female known to him as V. We can think of this two-way structure in terms of the production of cityspace. On the one hand, there is the space of California which I endeavored to analyze in the California trilogy. On the other, there is the New York dimension of Pynchon's spatial representation which remains to be investigated. Benny's aimless yo-yoing on the New York shuttle and the Staten Island Ferry makes *V.* "an urban novel" (Seed 74) which in large part depicts the space of New York. In this respect, the street, among other things, is an important symbol in the novel. Seed has argued that it "reappears constantly throughout *V.* as an embodiment of urban anomie." Indeed, the streets of New York do not offer any meaning or redemption to Benny who "had grown a little leery of streets … They had in fact all fused into a single abstracted Street, which come the full moon he would have nightmares about" (*V* 10).

Set almost entirely in New York City, *Bleeding Edge* demonstrates more clearly Pynchon's urban perspective regrading that cityspace. On the "the relentless suburbanizing" (*BE* 191) of the eastern end of once-rural Long Island, Christopher Leise has observed that "*Bleeding Edge*'s urban spaces resonate with the suburbia without, to the point where areas as inaccessible as Manhattan's slower westside and landfills 'will all be midtown' (*BE* 267)" (37). Furthermore, the Deep Web as the representation of a cyber territory has important implications in the novel. For instance, it might be considered as an alternative space that provides America with the possibility of temporarily

[28] See "Dream Tonight of Thomas Pynchon." *Dream Tonight of Peacock Tails: Essays on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Thomas Pynchon's V.* Edited by Simonetti, Paolo and Umberto Rossi (2015): 1.

escaping capitalism's greed of power and control. At the same time, it is pretty much a tool for capitalism's financial interests and corrupt exploitation. Some initial thoughts on the application of a geocritical approach to the California novels have shown important insights regarding the development and understanding of Pynchon's spatial awareness. This leaves open the possibility and begs the question that subsequent critical investigation explore its relationship to the rest of Pynchon's fiction, hopefully with the aid of some of the arguments presented in this thesis.

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